

**Learning to Read the Nation in
Twentieth-Century Australian
School Readers**

by

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Abstract

School Readers, once ubiquitous and indispensable elements of the Australian educational apparatus, contributed significantly to the development of a national imaginary. In analyses of Australian culture though, this contribution has been under-recognised. This thesis argues for a re-reading of, and sustained critical engagement with, early twentieth-century Australian school Readers and their encoded metanarrative of national growth. It examines a selection of first edition Readers from the Adelaide, Queensland, Tasmanian, Victorian, Western Australian and New Australian School Series (NSW). The shape of the Readers' metanarrative about origins, development and maturation, is reflected in the shape of the thesis.

Addressing the question of how Australians learned to read (and imagine) the nation, this thesis argues that the various stories, poems and images of the Readers comprise a shifting and contradictory metanarrative. As literary and cultural analysis, this study is attuned to the ways in which these texts, as metanarrative signs, are formally and historically specific, how they appear, reappear and circulate in a network of meanings operating within and outside of school Readers. The analysis is alert to aberrant or elided aspects of these signs, as well as to those that fit neatly within dominant and appealing thematic strands.

The first chapter examines the Readers' representation of children and childhood, arguing that the figure of the child is imbued with the nation's innermost cultural anxieties and desires, where childhood can be read as an (already corrupted)

metanarrative sign of a youthful, innocent nation. The second chapter is a reading of the imperial curriculum that simultaneously privileges and suppresses concerns about legitimacy and inheritance. Another effect of this pervasive ambivalence in school Readers is uncovered in the third chapter, where signs of an Australian Aboriginal presence are read as resistant, even as metanarrative codings insist on absence and silence. According to the reading of this repressive logic, in chapters 4 and 5 the focus shifts to the imitatory white indigene. Chapter 4 concentrates on iconic elements of the national imaginary: the pioneer, the bushman, the digger. Chapter 5 analyses intertextual visual signs for this white Australian legend, the Readers' frontispieces, photographs and illustrations.

The thesis concludes by arguing for a retrieval of the school Reader via a genealogy of reading books that uncovers and examines a colonial and Australian educational apparatus specifically in terms of its literary products. After all, school Readers institutionalise a vital part of an Australian literary imaginary.

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Metanarrative

About narrative; describing narrative. A narrative having (a) narrative as (one of) its topic(s) is (a) metanarrative. More specifically, a narrative referring to itself and to those elements by which it is constituted and communicated, a narrative discussing itself, a self-reflexive narrative, is metanarrative. Even more specifically, the passages or units in a narrative that refer explicitly to the codes or subcodes in terms of which the narrative signifies are metanarrative and constitute metanarrative signs (Gerald Prince, *Dictionary of Narratology*).

Introduction

This study, a story about stories, begins with the stories of my childhood. Annie, my grandmother, was a great storyteller. She was also a teacher. Following retirement, part of Annie's daily ritual was to take black tea and toast into "the den" to peruse death notices printed in the Melbourne dailies, the *Sun* and the *Age*. There she would usually find a name she knew, another teacher, a school inspector, a past pupil, the sibling or parent of such a pupil, all encountered at some point during a career of more than 40 years with the Victorian Education Department. A story from Annie always accompanied the name in the paper. For that reason I looked forward to Annie's ritual during my school holiday visits, even though I occasionally objected to accompanying her to funerals of people I'd never met.

In 1986, when I was nine, the Victorian Education Department reissued the first edition school Readers (in their entirety) as a kind of memorabilia item. My grandmother, mother and various aunts bought the boxed sets, making them a commonplace on family bookshelves. My grandmother, the kind of woman who still had school inspector reports from her pupil teacher days, kept hers on the mantelpiece. There the Readers were regularly dusted along with other markers of life stages and lifecycles; photographs of babies, graduations, wedding parties and people who had died, alongside bottles of holy water from Lourdes, cards and calendars sent by friends overseas. As a curiosity, and often at my grandmother's insistence, I read from the Readers during my frequent visits. I adored my

grandmother and, over time, I learned to love her Readers. They enabled me to imagine a past that seemed almost tangible, populated as it was by Annie's stories; the pickers' trains at Red Cliffs, barefoot children who arrived at school in sulkies, school picnics, dances for the war effort and the publican at Harrow who rode his bike down the hill to warn her whenever the school inspector was in town. When my grandmother died during my teenage years, I inherited her facsimile copies of *The Victorian Readers*. Now, lined up neatly along my office bookshelf, they are joined by many other well-loved, well-worn Australian school Readers (discovered in second-hand bookshops, farmhouse attics and, less romantically, on eBay).

In Australian literary studies, however, school Readers have been under-researched and overlooked. To some extent, and paradoxically I think, this is due to the nature of their production and consumption. Though they do contain literary texts, school Readers are not classed as literature, and by and large, school reading books are not valued in an institutional sense. As a result, school Reader collections are often incomplete, held in disparate locations around Australia and, congruently, they have largely escaped sustained critical attention. Yet, given that these books constitute prescribed reading material for generations of children in Australia's state schools, it is surprising that they have not been the focus of greater analysis, particularly within the fields of Australian literary and cultural studies.¹ In terms of a national literature *and* a national imaginary, school Readers are especially relevant. For many children in the early part of the twentieth century, school reading material provided the only Australian literature to which they were exposed. Indeed, for some children, particularly those living in depressed economic circumstances or in far-flung rural districts, school papers and books constituted the *only* reading material available. From the mid-1800s until the 1960s in Australia, the kinds of reading books available for use in schools and their prescription were so central as to determine the shape of the daily lesson and the curriculum more broadly. A genealogy of school Readers, and even more specifically, a close textual examination of the first of those that were locally produced, makes for a rich and barely-disturbed field of study where stories about growing up Australian are

ubiquitous. Indeed, as I argue, in reading across the corpus of early twentieth-century Australian school Readers, an uncovered and complex metanarrative of national growth can in turn be read for the kind of imaginary it narrates. Thus there are two main aims of this study: the recuperation of the school Reader as a valid subject of literary analysis, and an exploration of a Reader metanarrative, its literary and visual components and effects.

Gerald Prince points to the usefulness and complexity of the term “metanarrative”. I use the term advisedly, with an especial interest in how a school Reader metanarrative might be said to exist. I want, therefore, to focus briefly on the interaction between the semiotic and the narratological as I invoke them here.² Referring back to Prince’s definition, I read individual texts in school Readers as the “passages or units in a narrative that refer explicitly to the codes or subcodes in terms of which the narrative signifies” (51). In other words, the various stories, images and symbols that appear across school Readers constitute metanarrative signs. Not surprisingly though, these signs are complex and contingent, and reading them is always subjective. As well as identifying and isolating the narrative’s constituent elements, I am interested in how these elements appear, reappear and circulate in a network of meanings operating both within and outside of school Readers. To put it another way, I read the various individual stories and images in the Readers as the passages or units in the narrative. In this way, the recurrent themes, or the patterned deployment of these same stories and images (to which the individual passages or texts always refer), provide the codes or subcodes in which the narrative signifies. Moving beyond this emphasis on structure and semiotics, however, my study as literary and cultural analysis is attuned to the ways in which these various metanarrative signs contribute to an overarching narrative of national growth. In employing both structuralist and Marxist modes of reading I have been careful to avoid “depriv[ing] [texts] of their specificity (formal and historical) by regarding them as merely the manifestations of structures” (Bennett 260, qtd in Dixon 10). The cultural narratives I explore here I recognise as dialogic encounters always formed in relation to reader subjectivities and contemporaneous possibilities

for signification and meaning. The structure and the sign, the reader and the institution then, are never stable, passive, singular or unified. As opposed to readings of popular fiction, however, (the subject of Bennett's criticisms) a critique of school Readers cannot be divorced from the apparatus that produced them. Hence, my return to, and reliance upon, the "structural", even as I read for a narrative I understand as intangible, transitory and contingent.

Following Prince's narratological definition, it is possible to read a national imaginary (what I'm calling a metanarrative of national growth) in school reading materials. Here I selectively read both literary and visual texts in terms of how they act for, connect with, or refer to, the metanarrative's codes and subcodes. School Readers undoubtedly encode stories of origin and development, but just as often, these stories are marked by ambivalences, gaps and inconsistencies. Thus, in reading for a metanarrative, I am alert to ill-fitting, mismatched or elided elements as well as for those that neatly fit together in dominant and appealing thematic geometries. Seeking out these gaps, "aporias" or moments of self-contradiction is central to deconstructing both a metanarrative and its constituent signs (without which it cannot exist).

Before providing a brief historical overview of school Reader production, a necessary context for this study, I want to turn to its theoretical underpinnings. There are two key points to be made here and I will address them separately (though the ideas are interconnected). Firstly, that ideological presuppositions pervade written and visual texts, in overt and implicit senses, is central to this study. Of course, there is nothing at all new or surprising in such a claim. The myriad connections between language, literature, education and ideology are well established.³ Given that Australian school Readers are the subject of so little scholarship, however, it seemed to me prudent to start at the beginning, with some examination of the kinds of presuppositions that figure prominently in Reader texts. There is an added impetus also in the *form* of school Readers, doubly loaded as they are. Readers are part of a wider genre of children's literature, but even more

powerfully, an educational apparatus expressly produces these texts for an educational setting. In his study, *Language and Ideology in Children's Literature*, John Stephens persuasively argues that children's literature is especially concerned with fostering in the child reader an understanding of those socio-cultural values assumed to be normal or natural: "That is, children's fiction belongs firmly within the domain of cultural practices which exist for the purpose of socialising their target audience" (8). When children's literature is part of education processes involved in the formation of institutional and socio-cultural subjectivities, the stakes are raised considerably higher. Language and ideology are now at play within the classroom framework, where more or less correct ways of reading are reiterated and reinforced. From the outset then, my close readings critique the, often implicit, ideological assumptions of individual narratives, most particularly in relation to the politics of representation, encompassing interdependent discourses about gender, race and national identity. More importantly to the final shape of my study, however, I also pay particular attention to how various texts contribute to, or even resist, the encoded and encoding structures of a school Reader metanarrative (where an overarching story of national growth is equally marked by ideological assumptions).

Along with a focus on the interconnected nature of metanarrative signs and their ideological work, there is another, and equally important, dimension to my project. Because I am focussing on a story about national growth, I am interested in theories and methods for articulating ideas like nation and national identity, along with an exploration of how "growth" is implicated by and alongside these ideas. Firstly then, a preliminary reading of Australian school Readers suggests that questions of nation and nationness are a constant, troublesome preoccupation. For these questions can never be neatly, fully resolved. In a sense, a Reader metanarrative can be read as the sum of these attempts, shifting and unstable, just as its component parts are constructed and deconstructed through reading and re-reading. Any attempt to define or articulate an instance in the encoding of a Reader metanarrative comes unstuck as another reading or meaning appears in the repressed or

reinvented. What remain important, however, are the ways in which questions and problems of nation and nationness are posed in and by Reader texts, and the ways in which resolutions or answers are framed and attempted. In thinking through a metanarrative of national growth then, I am indebted to Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. Anderson's conceptualisation of the nation as an *imagined* political community is particularly pertinent to this study. Indeed, a "national imaginary" is an extremely useful way of engaging with a Reader metanarrative, where nation and nationness are always imagined and therefore, always contingent on recognisable signifiers of the make-believe.

Anderson's work has also been fruitful in terms of approaching school Readers as part of an educational apparatus, which is integral to the propagation of the national imaginary. While Anderson identifies print-capitalism, especially the newspaper, as providing the technical means for "re-presenting" the kind of imagined community that is the nation, I argue that this is only part of the story (35). The educational apparatus is equally powerful. Anderson's discussion of the "mass ceremony" of the newspaper, where "each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he [sic] performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others", an imagined world that is visibly rooted in everyday life, is akin to the everyday classroom rituals of school Reader consumption (Anderson 35). When Anderson asks of the newspaper, "what more vivid figure for the secular, historically clocked, imagined community can be envisioned?", I will argue that the school Reader serves equally as well (35). (For indeed, a newspaper reader must first be *taught* to read, usually accomplished in schools with the aid of literacy/literary materials, before he or she can enjoy the daily paper.) The "historically clocked" community of Anderson's definition also resonates here. Within the institutional setting, primary school students recognise themselves as members of a simultaneous readership where the ceremonies of reading are carefully observed, and where time, particularly the passing and recording of time, is manifest in every aspect of school life.

Secondly, the imagining and construction of time, imbricated with its recording and measurement, brings to mind another equally important part of the nation equation as predicated in school Readers, the idea of growth. On a number of levels, perceptions of growth entirely inform school Readers; their design, production, use and effects. Arranged according to grade levels and associated expectations of reading age, physical and intellectual development, the Readers measure and grade the growth of those children who read them. The ways in which school textbooks construct and mark chronological time, the lesson number, the lesson's duration, the class level; all in turn normalise a certain type of *progression* as "natural" and "inevitable". In this way, resistance to, or deviation from, such a conception of growth can be made "unnatural". As will be made clear in this thesis, there are significant ideological and often racist implications tied up with such notions of natural and inevitable development. Cultural constructions of time; the significance of the past, the values of the present and the expectations for the future essentialised in the school Reader and those texts selected for inclusion (and indeed, in the changes to such selections over time). Beginnings, development and change inform a metanarrative preoccupation with "National Growth", the imagined nation's imagined growth, that which is encoded as natural and organic. In school Readers the child, and by implication, the school student, stands in for nation, and the nation's growth mirrors and reflects that of the developing child.

It is school life that is always hovering at the edges of this study. Unlike other Australian or children's fictions, school reading books are entirely informed by the needs of an educational apparatus. In terms of production and consumption then, texts are written or selected for inclusion to educate children in particular socio-cultural values, a rather wider audience is ensured, and, to a large extent, methods for reading or interpreting the texts are informed by the institutional setting. Clare Bradford makes this same point in stating the case for a school Reader indexation project as part of the *AustLit* database:

The Readers were not simply read by children; they were used as literacy materials. This means that children listened to them and

read them, silently and aloud, many times over; some texts (especially poems) were committed to memory; and children were drilled in and tested for their capacity to read and understand the content of the Readers. As texts mediated by teachers and received by children in the institutional settings of schools, they did not simply influence individual readers, but afforded a shared experience which shaped communal values. The Federal Minister for Public Instruction said as much about the School Paper in 1909, noting that in this publication 'the Department possess[ed] a powerful means of producing educative effect in any desired direction' (qtd in Musgrave 1994). (Bradford "The Victorian Readers" 2)

While I recognise the significance of an educational context for the production and use of Readers, the purpose of my work is not to offer a critique of early twentieth-century educational policies, curricula and practices in Australia. Hence, there is an important distinction to be made between my work and that of a study like Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquest*, for instance, a project that is informed first and foremost by an examination of an education apparatus.⁴ Rather, I am interested in stories. To this end I employ close reading practices to trace and problematise a Reader metanarrative. I read individual texts, the passages or units of the narrative, in terms of how they refer to themselves, each other and their thematic arrangements as codes in which the metanarrative makes meaning.

Learning to read the nation: An educational apparatus and its products

As I have just suggested, this study is not intended to provide a thorough examination of the educational apparatus that produced Australian reading books, for such an undertaking is beyond the scope of the project. In the interests of contextualising my study though, it is necessary to sketch out something of the production and consumption histories of school Readers. To do this, I refer to the few published and unpublished works concerned with school reading material. In introducing them here, I acknowledge the gaps in this production history, because there are not comparable studies for each of the state reading series I consider in this thesis.⁵ Nor is there a comparative, historicized account of the numerous reading

series developed or used by the various Australian colonies and states.⁶ In the context of the colony and state of Victoria, however, Desmond Gibbs's unpublished 1987 thesis does go some way toward outlining the key figures, lobby groups, educational policies and practices that influenced Reader production and use.⁷ Another useful study relating to the *Victorian Readers* and the educational institution in that state is Peter Musgrave's monograph *To Be An Australian?: Victorian School Textbooks and National Identity 1895-1965*. Musgrave's articles published in the journal of the textbook colloquium, *Paradigm*, have also proven fruitful in tracing reading material used in Victoria.⁸ For information about the Tasmanian educational apparatus and the reading books used in that state, I have looked to Ralph Spaulding's unpublished thesis *Poetry and Tasmanian Institutions of Learning 1840-1950*. For Queensland, the Department of Education provides its own brief history of reading material as part of its facsimile edition of the *Queensland School Readers*. The accompanying pamphlet outlines the introduction of the Queensland series and those other reading series it replaced. Stewart Firth and Robert Darlington's "Racial Stereotypes in the Australian Curriculum: The Case-Study of New South Wales" and Firth's "Social Values in the New South Wales Primary School 1880-1914: An Analysis of School Texts" offer some illumination of the New South Wales school system and its reading materials. For information about South Australia and its school reading series, I have referred to Maureen Nimon's unpublished doctoral thesis of 1987, *Children's Reading in South Australia, 1851-1950*. In the case of Western Australia, John McKenzie's *Old Bush Schools: Life and Education in the Small Schools of Western Australia 1893 to 1961*, not only outlines the textbooks recommended in the west, but also provides anecdotal and documentary evidence about the ways in which these textbooks were used as part of teaching and learning programs.⁹

The few school Reader studies that do exist, and it must be noted that these are not usually literary analyses, offer only limited understandings of how ideological presuppositions are textually inscribed. Unsurprisingly then, these kinds of studies tend to present their findings without the support of close reading strategies (as

informed by critical/literary theory). For example, Desmond Gibbs describes Ethel Turner's "Walking to School" as "authentic" while, more problematically, K. Langloh Parker's legendary tales "remain an important and genuine source of native legends and stories" (233). Indeed, some of Gibbs's readings offer qualifications about taste and literature while simultaneously reproducing a Reader metanarrative of national growth:

By far the best of the Australian poetry in the series comes from the pens of the three big names in Australian literature: Henry Lawson (1867-1922), Adam Lindsay Gordon (1833-1870) and A. B. "Banjo" Paterson (1864-1941) [...] Lawson's prose and poetry have an enduring quality, Australian humour and sharp irony which has enabled them to be absorbed into the Australian national consciousness. In the same way, the six Paterson ballads chosen for the series, and the five by Gordon, evoke the human drama of life in the bush, the courage and endurance of pioneer bush life and the plucky inventiveness of the bushman. (232)

Similarly, P. W. Musgrave's monograph *To Be An Australian?: Victorian School Textbooks and National Identity 1895-1965*, is impaired by the study's wide focus, a survey of school Reader and school paper content, in both government and Catholic schools, over a period of some 70 years. Musgrave presents a theme and content analysis and, as his study is not informed by literary criticism, he rarely examines the ideological complexities of those texts and thematic elements to which he refers. He writes, for example: "In the *Fifth Reader* Lawson's poem, 'The Ballad of the Drover', and his story 'The Drover's Wife', helped to form a picture of pioneering days" (19). This kind of over-simplification does not begin to address these texts' considerable cultural work, nor does it acknowledge the contested ground occupied by the super-iconic "The Drover's Wife". In the same way, K. Edwards' unpublished Masters thesis of 1981, *Basic Reading Books in the Primary School Past and Present: A Content Analysis of Cultural, Social and Literary Themes*, suggests, rather superficially I think, that the Readers present "a wide cross-section of cultural attitudes and experiences" (97). In making these criticisms, I do not want to devalue such important studies (especially as they have been crucial in developing my understanding of the historical circumstances in which Readers were produced and

used). Rather, I am more concerned with comparatively situating my work, and its theoretical and methodological approaches. In a survey of the scope outlined by Musgrave, for example, where the primary focus is almost an archaeologising or unearthing of a rich body of primary material, some observations are necessarily over-simplified. In such an instance, Musgrave argues that “two main types of pioneer were presented to elementary school children: those who cleared the bush to farm and the diggers who sought gold” (“To Be An Australian” 19). Yet there was considerably more elasticity in both the literary and visual production of a pioneering paradigm in school Readers, as demonstrated in chapters four and five of this thesis.

Finally, another problem among existing school Reader studies, and one I hope to avoid, is the desire to generalise the findings of these kinds of projects. In these studies, focussed, as they usually are, on one colony or state’s educational apparatus and reading books, the state is read in place of the nation. For example, Musgrave argues (dangerously I think): “After examining such texts we are able, though in the main using material from Victoria, to speak more firmly of Australian rather than only of Victorian, identity” (“To Be An Australian” 8). Stewart Firth and Robert Darlington present a similar argument in relation to their case study of New South Wales education: “While there were some cultural differences between the states – South Australia, because it never had convicts, was less Catholic and Irish than New South Wales or Victoria, for example – we have no reason to believe that our analysis of school reading material is not true of Australia as a whole at that time, especially on the issue of attitudes to race” (80). There is a sense of homogeneity about school Readers, probably due to the similarities in production values (they do begin to look rather the same) and more especially, because particular stories and images are endlessly shared and recycled. Perceptively then, Clare Bradford writes: “The eight books which constitute the *Victorian Readers* are symptomatic of the reading material provided to school children in state and most independent schools across Australia during the first half of the twentieth century, when state-based school readers were produced: the *Victorian Readers*, the *Queensland Readers*, the

Adelaide Readers, the *Tasmanian Readers*" ("The Victorian Readers" 1). Here Bradford makes an important distinction; while one state reading series might be symptomatic of the greater corpus of school Readers, it cannot be read as representative. There are some substantive and important differences between Readers of various states. Significantly too, and in support of my earlier argument about the difficulty in tracing Australian school reading series, Bradford does not list other Australian series contemporaneous to the Victorian Readers, the *Swan School Readers* (WA), the *Western Australian Readers*, or the *New Australian School Series* of New South Wales.

Existing studies then, do not explore a nuanced Reader metanarrative, instead focusing on broader themes that can be generalised. Yet, as Bradford has already pointed out: "A theme-and-content analysis of the *Readers* does not capture the cultural work they carried out" ("The Victorian Readers" 4). To date, Bradford's *Reading Race* is the only critical work to undertake close readings of Australian school Readers and other textbooks. These readings inform part of a chapter about the racial ideologies of colonial discourse. I have looked to *Reading Race*, particularly Bradford's close reading strategies as informed by Foucauldian interrogations of knowledge and power, along with postcolonial theory, as a model for the kind of criticism undertaken here. In some senses, particularly in relation to my third chapter about Aboriginality and notions of white indigeneity, this thesis extends and builds upon Bradford's findings. Yet, in its specific focus on Readers, and its interest in the multiple ways in which questions of nation and nationness are played out within these books, this thesis clearly moves beyond Bradford's work, into the field to which she has gestured.

To illustrate the significance of school reading material, and the historical production and use of such material, I want to turn now to an outline of the structures and operation of the educational apparatus in Australia. In the nineteenth century, reflecting a broadly imperial-colonial relationship (where the complex figuring of Ireland cannot be so easily categorised in relationship to [other]

colonies), Australian schools used predominantly British textbooks. In large part, this was due to the poorly developed systems of education in the colonies and their reliance on either Irish or English educational models (and subsequently, on the concomitant textbooks). In each colony (and later in each state), the educational apparatus underwent several transformations before a relatively stable system was developed. During the early 1800s, two main systems of education dominated: private-venture and denominational schools. Private-venture schools ran as individual business enterprises and, as such, their continued operation was contingent on profit (Barcan 46). Denominational schools were opened and managed by the Churches, providing schools for Anglicans, Catholics, Presbyterians and Methodists, even as these schools varied considerably in terms of the quality of education received by their pupils. As the population grew, however, and settlers moved into outlying and remote areas, it became increasingly obvious that this approach was untenable. In New South Wales, the Select Committee of 1844 heard that the education question was dominated by three key problems: the lack of education among disadvantaged children; the expense of competing Church schools; and the special difficulty of geographical distance (Barcan 50, Austin 15). The committee reported:

The first great objection to the denominational system is its expense; the number of schools in a given locality ought to depend on the number of children requiring instruction [...] The very essence of the denominational system, is to leave the majority uneducated, in order thoroughly to imbue the minority with peculiar tenets [...] Wherever one school is founded, two or three others will arise, not because they are wanted, but because it is feared that proselytes will be made; and thus a superfluous activity is produced in one place, and a total stagnation in another. It is a system impossible to be carried out in a thinly populated country. (qtd in Barcan 51)

The problem of providing education in the rural hinterland is raised again in 1849 during a speech by National schools agent G. W. Rusden: “The destitution with regard to education in the interior is apparent to the Government, and must be to yourselves. I cannot doubt that you are anxious to remove that destitution, but I will trespass upon you for a short time, in order to explain why the Government offers to

step forward to assist you, and in what way it proposes to confer its aid" (Austin "George William Rusden" 129). The solution then, appeared to be the introduction of the Irish National system (established in Ireland in 1831). In this system, state elementary schools provided instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic as well as providing general moral and religious instruction that would accommodate all major Christian denominations (and where specialised instruction would be provided by visiting clergymen). While this approach appeared practical, the Churches were bitterly opposed. Alternatively, the British and Foreign School system, introduced without great success to Van Diemen's Land in 1839, provided a school system suited to all Protestants, with separate aid for Catholic schools (Barcan 62). The British and Foreign School System was also favoured in South Australia. The system was not particularly successful in South Australia, however, primarily because State funding was not available and the community could not adequately support the schools (Barcan 73). By the 1850s, as the education institutional framework became more established in Australia, denominational schools existed in all four colonies (New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land, Western Australia and South Australia). In New South Wales, including the future Victoria and Queensland, the national schools (based on the Irish system) existed alongside four systems of Church State-aided denominational schools. In Van Diemen's Land, Anglican and Catholic elementary schools received State aid, as did the struggling "Public schools", based on the British and Foreign System. In Western Australia, a number of "Colonial schools" received State funding alongside Catholic Schools, while in South Australia, State aid was not provided to denominational schools (except in the period 1847-51) and even secular education was given limited funding, where, instead, schools had to be conducted and maintained "on the self-supporting principle" (Barcan 92).

In the 1870s and 1880s great improvements were made to the educational apparatus with the introduction of free, compulsory and secular education. Most significantly for a study of school Readers, during this period the centralised control of State schools was established under Departments of Public Instruction (first in Victoria in

1872 and finally in Western Australia in 1895) (Austin 31). In terms of my focus on learning to read the nation in school Readers, this was a significant shift in educational policy and administration. As educational historian A. G. Austin observes: "These were obviously decisions of the greatest consequence for Australian society. At one stroke the colonial governments had abandoned the educational policies which were traditional in the Old World. They had dispensed with the co-operation of local governments and with the co-operation of the Churches – and in doing this they had taken on the enormous responsibility of providing, without any public co-operation and in the face of strenuous opposition from many citizens, a network of schools for this vast continent" (Austin 32). Clearly, this commitment to an education produced in response to local conditions impacted upon syllabi and related reading material. In terms of imperial/colonial relations too, positing the nation and its education systems in opposition to the "old world" required stories of national growth that would justify significant institutional investment and change.

Further educational reform occurred at the turn of the century when a series of Royal Commissions were established to enquire into the state of the educational systems. In 1899 in Victoria the government appointed a Royal Commission under the chairmanship of Theodore Fink, in New South Wales the Knibbs-Turner Commission was set up in 1903, and in 1904, Tasmania set up the Neale Commission. Following these inquiries, every state (except Queensland) began the new century by appointing Directors of Education. These directors were authorised to reform the various school systems (Austin 40). As well as administrative change, the educational reforms instituted by the new directors created a revolution in curricula and syllabus requirements. In the interests of efficiency and effectiveness in education, the Departments, with their monopoly of public education in each State, created a highly regulated system of education, specifying exactly what its schools would teach and how they would teach it (Austin 53, Nimon 184). Of course, such regulations mandated the use of particular school textbooks: "A 'uniform supply' of

text-books gave some stability to the school curriculum, establishing set standards of work and a range of graded reading material" (Gibbs ix-x).

In Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, the school system, based on the Irish National System of Education, employed the *Irish National Readers*. These Readers, produced in Dublin, were often criticised for their lack of relevance to the lives of children in colonial Australia. Hence, in Queensland in 1878, the *Australian Readers* replaced the *Irish National Readers*. As was common at the time, these Readers were still produced in Britain (the *Australian Readers* were published by Collins of Glasgow), but were developed for an Australian market. Usually, this meant the inclusion of stock stories about Australian flora and fauna and Australian exploration. The *Australian Readers*, for instance, were recommended due to their "strong Australian flavour" ("Queensland School Readers" n.p.). In 1892, the *Royal Readers*, published by Nelson, were introduced into Queensland. According to Queensland Department of Education material: "The selected edition of the Royal Readers had been prepared especially for Victorian schools, and so had significant Australian content" ("Queensland School Readers" n.p.).¹⁰ However, an examination of the Fifth Reader of the *Royal Crown Readers*, as published by Nelson in 1898, demonstrates the subjectivity with which claims of "significant Australian content" are made. In the Fifth Reader, only three texts are concerned with Australia, and in one example, the cursory mention of "far-off Australia" serves only to illustrate what might be learned of the world by reading the daily paper.¹¹ The other two stories, despite Australian subjects (the kangaroo and the platypus), have English focalisers. In Queensland in 1905, the introduction of a new syllabus precipitated the need for a new, more relevant reading series. In 1908, the Minister for Public Instruction appointed a Readers Committee, including the departmental director and under-secretary, four school inspectors and four teachers. The committee was responsible for selecting a reading series and during the process, considered twenty-six sets of Readers received from publishers.¹² The committee chose the *Coral Readers*, produced by a Brisbane syndicate of businessmen and schoolteachers although half of the content of these Readers was deemed unsuitable. As such, a subcommittee

provided new material. This led to the production of books I to VI of the *Queensland School Readers*, distributed to Queensland schools in June 1914. When a new syllabus in 1930 reclassified pupils into seven grades instead of six, the Readers underwent some minor changes. What is extraordinary about this reading series, however, is its longevity. As the education department pamphlet that accompanies the facsimile edition attests: “The original readers remained basically the same until they were phased out in the 1970s” (“Queensland School Readers” n.p.).

In Victoria, similarly informed by its beginnings as part of the colony of New South Wales, there were also a series of changes in school reading material before a Victorian series was introduced. In his study, Gibbs highlights three relatively distinct periods, the Irish monopoly, 1848-1877, the British phase, 1877-1896 and a National phase, 1896-1948. Reflecting the difficulty in establishing exact periods of Reader usage, Peter Musgrave suggests 1851-1873 as the era of the Irish National Reader and 1875-1895 for Nelson’s *Royal Readers* (“The Historical Sociology of Textbooks” 1). In introducing the Irish National reading series, the Port Philip agent for promoting the system of National schools, G. W. Rusden, notes that they are inexpensive and contain an implicit Christian morality (Austin “George William Rusden” 135). More interestingly, in terms of imperial-colonial relations as read via a textbook genealogy, Rusden (and the board he represents) make the assumption that the books will provide appropriate reading material for colonial children: “The books which the Government in this colony offers to you in National Schools are those used in National Schools in Ireland; and by the exertions of the National Board in this country, and the kindness of the Board *at home* you are enabled to furnish your children with them in this country at between 30 to 40 per cent cheaper than they could be bought at a shop in England” (Austin “George William Rusden” 133). Later though, school inspectors criticised the Irish Readers on the grounds that pedagogically, “the gradation of material was too rapid for colonial children” and culturally, that the contents were “not suited to the colony” due to references to the plants, animals, climate and habits of another hemisphere (qtd in “The Historical Sociology of Textbooks” 2). Nelson’s *Royal Readers* subsequently replaced The *Irish*

National Readers. Even so, criticisms about the lack of Australasian material persisted. Therefore, prior to the introduction of the *Victorian Readers*, Victorian government schools relied upon *The School Paper* to provide a more relevant reading program for Australian students.¹³ *The School Paper* was introduced in 1896, and in the following two decades, Education Departments in New South Wales and Queensland began their own papers. The Victorian-produced paper was also prescribed reading in Tasmania, Western Australia and Fiji. In 1925, however, the Victorian Education Department undertook a project to vastly extend the reading matter available for students with the instigation of a series of locally produced Readers. Committees of school inspectors, teachers and artists selected texts for inclusion in the Readers. The general editor was Charles Long, former district school inspector and editor of the *School Paper* (recalled from retirement specifically to oversee this project). The First and Eighth Grade Readers were published in 1928, the Third and Sixth Readers in 1929 and the Second, Fourth, Fifth and Seventh in 1930. James McRae, Director of Education, hoped the Readers would provide a “sounder treatment of literature”, which was “the most important subject of instruction in *any* school, both from the point of view of its immediate value and of its influence in later life” (qtd in Musgrave “Readers in Victoria, II” 1). This series dominated Victorian schools for another thirty years.

It is more difficult to date the introduction of the New South Wales Readers, the *New Australian School Series*, which bears the imprimatur of the New South Wales Department of Public Instruction. The title page reads: “Adopted by the Department of Public Instruction for use in the Public Schools of New South Wales”. In their study, Firth and Darlington suggest the Fourth Reader was first published about 1908 (81). The Deakin University Textbook Collection is also uncertain of publication dates, as is the National Library of Australia.¹⁴ It would appear, however, that the production and use of the New South Wales Reader series roughly preceded or paralleled that of the Queensland series. In Firth’s sole-authored article, he suggests a publishing date of about 1899 (149). *The New Australian School Series* was published by William Brooks in Sydney, edited by

Robert Francis Irvine (1861-1941) and illustrated by David Henry Souter (1862-1935). As such, this series was edited, illustrated and published by Australians. In New South Wales, the magazine for children in government schools between 1904 and 1916 was the *Commonwealth School Paper* (Firth and Darlington 80). In 1916 the New South Wales *School Magazine* replaced the previous publication.

South Australia was perhaps more proactive than other state education systems in terms of the reading materials it set out to produce. According to Nimon: "In 1889 Inspector General Hartley of South Australia achieved the ultimate combination of formal and informal education through children's reading by his introduction of the *Children's Hour*. The *Children's Hour*, which became a prescribed part of the reading syllabus, was drawn up in imitation of juvenile magazines of the day" (2). It was this magazine upon which other Australian states modelled their supplementary reading, magazines such as the Victorian *School Paper* for example. In South Australia the reading material first prescribed by the Central Board of Education in 1860 was the *Irish National Series* (Nimon 17). The Board had only one criticism of this series, based on its unsuitability for children living in the southern hemisphere (Nimon 17). Preference for the Irish books was due really to their cheapness and durability. Nimon points out that the books of the British and Foreign School Society were considered in some ways better than their Irish counterparts, but "their extra cost militated against their being bought as frequently" (19). In his study of British textbooks, *The Social Content of Education 1808-1870*, J. M. Goldstrum points out the competitiveness of the Irish series, where the books could be sold below cost or even given away, therefore ensuring their considerable success (86-7). As Nimon explains, there were other factors that recommended the use of such texts in colonial Australia. Along with their non-denominational Christian and moral values, these Readers represented what were perceived as *British* values:

South Australians saw nothing anomalous in pursuing their educational goals through the agency of a reading syllabus imported from England. Though their circumstances were very different from those in which the readers had been composed, they did not see the books as unsuitable. The books represented British ways of thinking

and British values. They were therefore appropriate for a British community no matter how removed from the mother country. In fact, they offered a way of transporting British customs to the shores of the Southern Ocean. (Nimon 55)

According to Nimon's study, the reading syllabus of the licensed schools in South Australia remained almost unrevised from 1852 to 1878 (58). In 1878, the *Royal Readers* were introduced. The most dramatic change in reading material, however, occurred in 1889, when the *Children's Hour* was created as a new form of classroom reading book. The *Children's Hour* was used alongside the *Royal Readers* until it became the sole prescribed reading material for classes III and IV (the compulsory educational standards). The South Australian education department, roughly contemporaneously with the Victorian department, also produced a series of reading books for use in its public books, *The Adelaide Readers*. The preface to this series explains that the Readers conform to the revised Course of Instruction issued in 1924. Accordingly, Book I, II and IV were published in 1925, Book III in 1926 and Book V in 1927.

In Western Australia, there were at least two locally produced reading series, the *Swan Readers* and the *Western Australian Readers*. John McKenzie's history of life and education in the small schools of Western Australia, *Old Bush Schools*, does provide some useful detail about the "basic reading books" supplied free to government schools (111). According to McKenzie, the first Reader officially prescribed for use in departmental schools was the *New Graphic*, followed by the *Temple Literary Reader*, and in 1910, the *Oxford Reader*. Despite these books remaining in schools for a considerable period of time "for good reason", they were not ideal: "Their chief drawback was that the content was exclusively English and a growing feeling that Australian children should be directed to look at their own environment led to the production of the *West Australian Readers*, beginning in 1916, and the *Swan Reader* in 1920 [...] Though the proportion of Australian content was minimal, it was a beginning" (McKenzie 111). Just as in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and New South Wales, teachers "were able to dredge further such content" from more ephemeral reading material produced for this purpose

(McKenzie 111). In Western Australia, this included *The School Paper*, *Our Rural Magazine* and the *Education Circular*. McKenzie notes the 1920s and 1930s “saw the writing of a whole series of school texts for both primary and secondary classes by West Australian inspectors and teachers, replacing the texts of English origin which had prevailed hitherto” (112-13). Although McKenzie does not provide titles for these school texts, the publishing dates of the *Swan Reader Fifth Book* and the *Western Australian Reader Book VI*, 1920 and 1932 respectively, suggest that these are the series to which he refers.¹⁵ J. Reford Corr, headmaster of Melbourne’s Methodist Ladies’ College from 1894 to 1906, was responsible for compiling the Swan School Readers for the WA Education Department (Gibbs 244-5).

In Tasmania, Ralph Spaulding’s extensively researched survey of the teaching of poetry at primary, secondary and tertiary level provides insights into both the formation and development of the education apparatus and its reading materials in that state. Indeed, Spaulding goes so far as to argue that during the 1800s, school reading materials determined institutions of learning: “For most of the nineteenth century, Tasmanian primary schools were managed and regulated almost entirely by the school readers. Initially, schools’ entire learning and assessment programs, except for mathematics, were based on the readers, with the result that these texts controlled the working and learning lives of both teachers and pupils” (17). Spaulding likens the authority invested in the Readers to that invested in the biblical canon by the church (18). It is a bold but valid claim, supported by numerous accounts of teaching and learning during this period (and into the early twentieth century). Indeed, in England in 1860, Matthew Arnold writes that, other than a bible, a child might only read a school reading book: “It is not enough remembered in how many cases his reading-book forms the whole literature except his Bible, of the child attending a primary school” (qtd in Goldstrom *Elementary Education* 152). In Australia, contemporaneous education documents reiterate the centrality of the textbook. In “Twelve Practical Rules for the Teachers of National Schools” of 1853, teachers are instructed “to classify the children according to the National School books; to study those books themselves; and to teach according to

the improved methods pointed out in their several prefaces” (qtd in Austin & Selleck 45). In the same way, in South Australia in 1860, the Central Board of Education advised teachers that achieving “a uniform system of teaching” would require them to: “as speedily as possible [...] arrange their scholars into two, three, four, or five classes, in accordance with the lesson-books of the Irish National Society, or those of the British and Foreign School Society” (qtd in Nimon 20).

School Readers used in Tasmania from the late 1830s until the turn of the century included the *Daily Lesson Books* as published by the British and Foreign School Society, the *Irish National Readers*, the *Australian Readers* and the *Royal Readers*. The *Royal Readers* were prescribed for use in government primary schools until 1906. In 1904, William Neale, the Director of Education in Tasmania from 1905 to 1909, recommended the use of the Victorian Education Department’s *School Papers*, as they constituted “the best and cheapest form of school reading books” (qtd in Spaulding 205). From 1906, the Victorian *School Papers* were prescribed reading in Tasmanian schools (along with *Tasmanian History Readers*, texts solely concerned with British history as reprinted by the Education Department with permission from Nelson, the London publishers). In the 1920s Tasmania began producing its own reading material, mainly limited to the infant and junior classes, and in 1924, the fifth and sixth books of the *Pacific Readers*, produced by the Christchurch firm Whitcombe and Tombs, replaced the *School Papers* as class Readers. In 1929, Longman’s *British Empire Readers* were introduced. Both sets of the new readers were designed for school use in countries across the British Empire. The *Pacific Readers* were more clearly aimed at primary school children in Australia and New Zealand. Indeed, it was the success of Whitcombe and Tombs, and the appeal of a lucrative slice of the educational publishing market that instigated Longman’s series.¹⁶ Finally, in 1933, the *Tasmanian Readers* were published. “For the first time, senior Tasmanian Education Department officers had selected the reading material across all grades specifically for the State’s schools” (Spaulding 284).

As this brief survey has demonstrated, the advent, rise and decline of various school reading series vary considerably across Australia. To provide a reference guide to these series and the school systems that produced them, I have included an appendix that tabulates school Readers and their publication dates (although it is an approximate guide only because while it would be undoubtedly valuable, an exhaustive production history has not been the focus of my study). In another variation to school systems that has, at times, proven difficult during the course of my research, school grade levels change according to syllabus requirements, or vary from state to state. For the purposes of consistency within my study then, I have concentrated on upper level school Readers (usually from the third book up to the highest in the series). These books are aimed at an older, more sophisticated audience, providing texts of greater complexity as well as introducing more Australian content to readers. To further narrow the parameters of the study, I have focused entirely on the first editions of the various reading series. Comparison between Readers of varying production dates, specifically the inclusion or exclusion of particular texts, would no doubt sustain a separate study in itself. Finally, to avoid those criticisms of “generalisation” which I have already levelled at others, I want to reiterate that my arguments here are based on the Readers to which I have had access (though notably, access was more or less limited depending on whether or not it was restricted to library collections and, furthermore, where those libraries were located). To my knowledge, I have drawn upon what constitutes complete first edition reading series from Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland. Accessing school Readers from Western Australia has proven more difficult: I have made use of *The Swan School Readers Fifth Book* (1920), the *Western Australian Reader Book IV* (1933) and the *Western Australian Reader Book VI* (1932).

Earlier in my introduction, I drew attention to how important ideas about growth are to this study. In structuring this thesis then, I have deliberately and consciously invoked metaphors of growth, life stages and lifecycles in staging my argument. In this way, my argument charts what, at first, appears to be a logical, though cyclical

metanarrative development, from the figure of the child to the masculinist figure of the bush and back again: mirroring the ways in which a school Reader metanarrative privileges and produces a particular kind of subject formation. Of course, this subject formation extends beyond the child reader her or himself. For, in rehearsing an overarching national story and its effects, the political, social and cultural concerns of a national imaginary are similarly reiterated. Yet, as I have already made clear, this grand narrative is contradictory, flawed and, at times, highly illogical and irrational. While individual stories as metanarrative signs sometimes appear to clearly state one thing (at least on the surface), the sign might simultaneously point toward something else entirely. Directions for growing up Australian in school Readers are never simply linear and straightforward. In this way too, my argument is not so much a straightforward linear progression as a circular one. As the thesis develops, I revisit metanarrative signs and codings again and again to reconsider and complexify my readings of national growth in a variety of Australian school reading books.

In my first chapter then, I begin by examining the figure of the child, around which ideals of an Australian nation and nationhood are constructed. The literary production of this child, I argue, is imbued with the nation's innermost cultural anxieties and desires. This chapter, "'A Little Child Shall Lead Them': The Literary Production of Children and Childhood", reads lost, brave and idealised Australian children as (already corrupted) metanarrative codes for a youthful and innocent nation. In my second chapter, "The Imperial Curriculum: Literary Effects of the Mother Country", I examine how an Imperialist Colonialism both excavates and suppresses anxieties about claims to a deep past, legitimacy and inheritance. This ambivalence at the heart of the national story is most strikingly manifested in my third chapter, "Traces of Aboriginality: Problems of Presence and Absence". This chapter argues for a persistent Aboriginal presence throughout a metanarrative of national growth, even as narrative codings insist upon absence and silence. In this sense, I read for signs of resistance. In chapters four and five I shift my focus, according to an inherent logic of effacement, from Australian Aboriginal peoples to

the imitatory white indigene. A school Reader metanarrative enacts an Australian legend in all its stereotypical guises and permutations. In Chapter 4 I concentrate on the literary signs for the touchstone figments of the national imaginary, the pioneer, the bushman, the digger. In Chapter 5 I shift my focus to visual signs for the legend, the frontispieces, photographs and illustrations.

My conclusion does not offer any singular or reductive reading of such a multi-layered, unstable and ambivalent national story. Rather, I consider what contribution school Reader research might make to a genealogy of Australian literature. In drawing attention to this rich field of research, I hope to open up a dialogue in which the importance of school Readers features more prominently in discussions about Australian literary studies and its institutionalisation. The use of locally-produced reading books is surely integral to tracing both the lineage for, and the institution of, national storytelling. It is impossible to judge precisely how successful school texts were in shaping communal values. It is possible, however, to go back to school Readers to ascertain the kinds of values apparently represented, what contradictions and ambivalences underpinned the literary promulgation of these values, and ultimately, how questions of nation, nationness and national literatures were framed, perpetuated and supposedly, resolved. As Stephen Heathorn argues in his study of British school Readers: "The reading of specially prepared reading books was thus the very nexus of the power/knowledge dialectic in the elementary classroom. They provided root meanings for abstract concepts of identification ... such as the 'nation', 'home', and 'race', and structured those meanings in a system of images and connected symbols (a 'syntax of identity') through historical, geographical and literary narratives" (20). As my reminiscences about my grandmother at the beginning of this thesis highlight, re-reading school Readers allows us to revisit and critique those familiar stories we have long been taught to tell ourselves.

Notes:

¹ Clare Bradford also notes the lack of scholarly work about school Readers “despite the[ir] cultural importance” in her introductory essay to the Victorian Readers project within the children’s literature subset of the Australian Literature database, *AustLit*. School Reader indexation on this database (though it is restricted to only *Victorian Readers*) is evidence of the growing recognition of the significance of this kind of material, as well as evidence of the need for further scholarship in this area.

² There is another, equally useful, way of thinking about metanarrative where the etymological roots of the term, “meta” means “after”, suggest an important relationship between individual narratives and what comes after, the metanarrative. In this sense, a school Reader metanarrative can be understood as the overarching story adduced from a reading of all those that came before. While such an approach is helpful in describing a Reader metanarrative, it doesn’t offer a formula for reading, and therefore, it does not form my focus here.

³ There is an extensive amount of critical literature on the ways in which ideology informs the education apparatus and its products. In *Masks of Conquest*, for example, Gauri Viswanathan offers a post-colonial critique of the institutionalisation of English literature (with a capital “L”) in colonial India. There are numerous other studies focussed on the rise of English studies as an ideological construct, or more broadly, about the British system of imperial education. See J. A. Mangan (ed), *The Imperial Curriculum*, for example. For an examination of curricula and textbooks in the North American context, refer to Michael Apple’s *Ideology and Curriculum* or Michael Apple and Linda Christian-Smith (eds), *The Politics of the Textbook*. Within an Australian context, Leigh Dale’s *The English Men* offers a history and analysis of English literature as it was instituted at Australian colonial universities. For England, Stephen Heathorn’s *For Home, Country, and Race: Constructing Gender, Class and Englishness in the Elementary School, 1880-1914*, examines ideology, elementary school culture and national identity. J. M. Goldstrom’s *The Social Content of Education 1808-1870: A Study of the Working Class School Reader in England and Ireland* is also concerned with the social conditioning of children within an educational context.

⁴ Of course, the radically different histories of colonisation in India and Australia would preclude me from reproducing Viswanathan’s research paradigms in an Australian context.

⁵ There does appear to be considerably more research about New Zealand textbook production. A reason for this might be New Zealand’s unified educational system (as opposed to the disparate colonial and state administered school systems that existed in the Australian context). While New Zealand Readers cannot be considered here, Colin McGeorge’s articles are instructive in relation to the school Reader research carried out in that former British colony, as well as in relation to possible trans-Tasman connections. See, for instance, McGeorge’s “New Zealand School and Ethnic Identity in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries”, *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 2002; “What was ‘Our Nation’s Story’? New Zealand Primary School History Textbooks Between the Wars”, *History of Education Review*, 1999; “The Presentation of the Natural World in New Zealand Primary Schools 1880-1914”, *History of Education Review*, 1994; “Learning about God’s Own Country”, *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 1983.

⁶ Again, within the New Zealand educational context, Hugh Price's bibliography of New Zealand-produced textbooks, *School Text Books Published in New Zealand to 1960*, offers something of this nature.

⁷ For a more detailed discussion of the text books used in Victorian schools, see Desmond Gibbs' unpublished Ph.D thesis: *Victorian School Books; A Study of The Changing Social Content and Use of School Books in Victoria, 1848-1948, with Particular Reference to School Readers*.

⁸ See Musgrave, P. W.: "Readers in Victoria, 1896-1968, I: *The School Paper and Children's World*", *Paradigm*, no. 15, 1994; "Readers in Victoria, 1896-1968, II: *The Victorian Readers*", *Paradigm*, no. 16, 1995; "The Historical Sociology of Textbooks: A Victorian Case Study", *Working Papers from the Textbook Colloquium*, No. 1, 1999.

⁹ There are numerous education histories for all the state education departments examined here but usually, these histories include only passing reference (if any reference at all) to the production of reading material such as school papers and school Readers.

¹⁰ As Hugh Price's bibliography of New Zealand textbooks reveals, Nelson was particularly prolific in producing series of Readers for the lucrative antipodean market, publishing the *Royal School Series* for some three decades, variously titled *The Royal Readers*, *The New Royal Readers*, *Royal Star Readers*, *Royal Crown Readers* and *The Royal King Infant Readers* (152).

¹¹ I think this essay is more significant in terms of the comment it inadvertently makes in support of Benedict Anderson's argument about the figuring of the newspaper in the national imaginary. Foreshadowing Anderson's perception of the newspaper's centrality to the imagined but geographically diverse community, the unnamed author of the piece writes: "It seems as if we were in fairyland, and had the power of flying in a moment to any part of the earth by merely wishing to be there" (*Royal Crown Reader* 1898, 16).

¹² The number of reading series submitted suggests the lucrative nature of the school publishing market.

¹³ The South Australian Government was the first to start such a paper, *The Children's Hour*, in 1889 (Musgrave, "Readers in Victoria I" 1).

¹⁴ I have included the catalogue information for this series here to demonstrate the lack of information available about the Readers of *The New Australian School Series*. The Deakin Library textbook collection cites the publication dates as follows: First Reader [1903], Second Reader [between 1900 and 1919], Third Reader [191?], Fourth Reader [191?], Fifth Reader [191?] and Fifth Reader revised edition [1916?]. The National Library of Australia suggests a publication date of [191?] for all its holdings from this series. As Spaulding writes: "It is likely that the readers were reprinted at various times early in the twentieth century" (130).

¹⁵ I have not had the opportunity to examine a 1916 *West Australian Reader* earlier mentioned by McKenzie. I suspect, however, that this 1916 edition was an "Australianised" version of an existing Reader series (sometimes, with the publisher's permission, education departments reprinted school books from other states, or from Britain, with revised titles and sometimes, slightly revised content). The publication dates of other locally-written and produced Readers suggests that the school texts McKenzie here attributes to West Australian inspectors and teachers belong to the *Western Australian Reader* series of the early 1930s.

While it might be a misprint, the change in title from the *West* to the *Western* Australian Reader is also significant.

¹⁶ Colin McGeorge, educational historian and authority on New Zealand school Readers, made this connection for me during an interview in Christchurch, 3 July, 2008.

“A Little Child Shall Lead Them”: The Literary Production of Children and Childhood

This chapter is framed by the same quotation that appears on the first edition title pages of the First and Second Books of *The Victorian Readers*, published in 1928 and 1930 respectively. To my reading of a school Reader metanarrative, the child as a primary site of cultural imagining serves as a beginning, not only to this chapter, and indeed to my thesis, but also as the entry point to those ideological preoccupations informing national growth; whereby the child is represented (in texts) and positioned (through texts) as the embodiment of a nation's hope and future. The child of Australian school Readers is the central element around which ideals of an Australian nation and nationhood are constructed. The literary production of this child, I argue, is imbued with the nation's innermost cultural anxieties and desires. Moreover, childhood in the Readers encodes both the mythological innocence of the nation as well as its youth, vitality, and by implication, its future. The figure of the child negotiating the threshold into adulthood, metaphorically the most important aspect of national growth, is therefore a primary concern of texts as metanarrative signs reproduced in school Readers. Of the narratives specifically concerned with Australian children, I will

examine the dominant and often inter-related discourses of children and childhood: the lost child, the brave boy, and the brave girl, all produced out of a unique communion with the Australian bush. In narratives of children lost in the bush, childhood (innocence) is portrayed as a fragile state, suggesting the nation's preoccupation with its own precarious sense of innocence. In representations of brave boys and girls, where there are clear gendered and racialised identities at work, the child as "leader" and his or her proximity to adulthood provides the reference point around which a nation can define itself. In school Readers from around Australia, these same codings are prevalent. Indeed, even texts about children of other nationalities and from non-Australian cultural backgrounds are co-opted into/by the Readers' production of a particular kind of idealised, white child and childhood.

This is not to suggest that children and childhood can or should be read as definitive and static throughout the very different texts of school Readers. Rather, the dominant discourses of children and childhood interwoven throughout produce in the readership an apperception of the ideal child, or more pertinently, the shape of an ideal future member of the Australian community. While the selection committees and publishers of various Australian school Readers are not as explicit as those of the Pacific Readers, the preface to the Pacific Readers could equally serve for its Victorian, Tasmanian, Queenslander, West Australian or South Australian counterparts. It reads: "The Pacific Readers [...] will at the same time assist in fostering the growth of national and patriotic sentiments, which cannot be inculcated at too early an age." The symbolic association of the child and the nation is a familiar trope in Australian children's literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Invested in the innocence of the young and the child's naïve adventurous spirit is the potential of a new nation. Naturally then, school Readers are not the only texts for children concerned with inspiring future generations with national and patriotic sentiment. In her opening to one of Australia's best-known children's novels *Seven Little Australians*, Ethel Turner locates a wellspring of hope in the nation's children and in its very youthfulness. "It may be that the land and

the people are young-hearted together, and the children's spirits not crushed and saddened by the shadow of long years' sorrowful history. There is a lurking sparkle of joyousness and rebellion and mischief in nature here, and therefore in children" (7). In an evolving literary discourse of children and childhood that is institutionalised in the Readers, children are "the spirited, single-hearted, loyal ones who alone can 'advance Australia'" (*Seven Little Australians* 8).

The age of innocence – the lost child

The innocent child has a particular resonance for Australia as nation, a nation clinging to its own innocence at the time the Readers were published, some as early as the first decade of the twentieth century and others in the 1920s and 1930s. During this period, barely-formed patriotic sentiment and a "sparkle of joyousness" were increasingly threatened by the horrors of Aboriginal displacement and genocide, the economic, social and political fallout of the First World War, and perhaps most powerfully, the legacy of a nineteenth-century "innocence" (ignorance) of the Australian natural environment. In lost children narratives, nature (not the merely "mischievous" entity envisioned by Turner) has the power to transform innocence into an adult knowingness. More dramatically, through death, innocence is replaced with a different kind of maturity and cultural sensibility. As such, a dark and pervasive cultural anxiety, a fear of the fragility of innocence, underpins these texts of lost children, especially children lost in the bush.

Peter Pierce's useful study, *The Country of Lost Children*, provides extensive analysis of two of the nineteenth-century texts reproduced in the Readers (the adapted version of Reverend P. W. Fairclough's "Lost in the Bush" and Marcus Clarke's "Pretty Dick"), as well as broader analysis of these mythological stories as they relate to an Australian cultural heritage. Pierce reads narratives of lost children as "metaphorical, for the figure of the lost child becomes a vital means for European Australians in the latter half of the nineteenth century to express and understand the insecurities of their position in a land that was new to many of them, and strange to all" (Pierce xiii). While the lost child's symbolic status as identified by

Pierce is clearly relevant, the significance of these narratives in the context of the Readers extends beyond the anxieties of a European settler society. As Pierce acknowledges, "this figure would also afford an opportunity to develop the discourse of 'young Australia', that is, to speculate on the nature of the coming race in this country, and the future of the nation soon to be" (8). As institutional texts published more or less 20 years after Federation, the Readers are concerned with the literary production of children and childhood via the technologies of education as analogous with the mythical production of an innocent Australia. Therefore, it is innocence (and the protection or destruction of this innocence) that in both literal and metaphorical senses forms the central concern of lost children narratives in the Readers.

There are four texts particularly relevant to this discussion; "Lost in the Bush", published in *The Victorian Readers Fourth Book*, "Pretty Dick" in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade V*, "How the Child was Lost" in *Queensland School Readers Book V*, and "A New Year's Day Adventure" from *The Victorian Readers Fourth Book*.¹ In all of these narratives, the child protagonists typify a view of childhood as a rarefied social condition, a naturally innocent state that should be valued and protected as such. The emergence of this idea of childhood, the notion that children should exist in a separate social domain to be mothered and treasured, is a product of the modern era (Ariès 29). In *Pictures of Innocence*, Anne Higonnet names the image of the naturally innocent child that has evolved since the seventeenth century the "Romantic child" (16-7). Significantly, for the context of the Readers, Higonnet argues that the Romantic child denies or allows us to forget aspects of adult society (23). And just as importantly, the child figure (and the state of childhood) can be reinscribed as reminiscent of an idealised past, a past romanticised in the very process of remembering:

The modern child is always the sign of a bygone era, of a past which is necessarily the past of adults, yet which, being so distinct, so sheltered, so innocent, is also inevitably a lost past, and therefore

understood through the kind of memory we call nostalgia. (Higonnet 27)

Written, produced and mediated by adults, the Readers can be read in relation to such nostalgia, through what is a selective recording and reordering of an ideal childhood necessary to envisioning an illustrious narrative of national growth, along with, naturally, a promising future.

Roni Natov's study *The Poetics of Childhood* and Peter Coveney's *The Image of Childhood* adduce similar arguments about the rise of the Romantic child, as promulgated in a literary context by Rousseau, Blake and Wordsworth. Higonnet's notion of nostalgia, the significance of childhood in relation to the rediscovery of a lost past (lost in both the individual past and in the past of the culture), is taken up by Natov in citing Carolyn Steedman's *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority 1780-1930*. Following Steedman's work, Natov suggests that reclaiming a childhood past "suggests a larger historical retrieval as well, so that the idea of childhood and the modern idea of history emerged together" (4). This is particularly apparent in relation to the representation of innocence in narratives literally concerned with loss, lost children and lost innocence. Coveney agrees: "In childhood lay the perfect image of insecurity and isolation, of fear and bewilderment, of vulnerability and potential violation" (31-2).²

The title of Marcus Clarke's short story "Pretty Dick" is in itself suggestive of a romanticised childhood innocence.³ The artistic precursors to this idyllic version of childhood (most notably Sir Joshua Reynold's *The Age of Innocence*, reproduced as the frontispiece of *The Victorian Readers Second Book*) offer images of pretty, luminescent children - the paleness of soft skin highlighted by rosy cheeks. In keeping with such depictions of childhood, Pretty Dick is described as "a slender little lad, with eyes like pools of still water when the sky is violet at sunset, and a skin as white as milk" (1). Yet there is a clear differentiation between Pretty Dick and his European forebears - his skin "where it had been touched by the sun [...]"

was a golden brown" (1). Pretty Dick's suntan marks him as an Australian child. Furthering this notion of an Australian identity (revealed by a preoccupation with rural masculinity), Pretty Dick is "manly too" (1). Pretty Dick's manliness is at odds with his childlike appearance, yet his innocence is maintained. Such tensions and contradictions surface throughout school Readers. How can the figure of the child be deployed as both an "innocent" at the same time as he is a knowing inheritor of a particular kind of national legacy? In the stories themselves, and more particularly as they can be read as instances of the Readers' larger metanarrative, the contradictions are rarely resolved. To this point at least, Pretty Dick is clearly still a child, with child-like desires and pleasures. Paddling and playing at the creek, he sings "scraps of his mother's songs", and slips "merrily between friendly trunks and branches" (2). Even the personification of the creek encapsulates a mood of childish abandonment. "Here his friend, the creek, divided itself into all sorts of queer shapes, and ran here, and doubled back again [...] just out of pure fun and frolic" (2).

Significantly, Pretty Dick's innocent pleasure becomes tainted as he moves toward the creek "Crossing Place". "Now the way began to go up-hill, and there were big, dead trees to get over, and fallen, spreading branches to go round" (4). The crossing place stands for Pretty Dick's own crossing of the very fragile boundary of childhood, and his innocence is under threat as he steps outside the "known" into the foreign and seductive bush. "There was a subtle perfume about him now; not a sweet rich perfume like the flowers in the home-station garden, but a strange, intoxicating smell" (4). The natural environment becomes a more foreboding presence as he continues upwards in a transgression against nature (both in terms of the bush itself and in terms of dangerously stepping beyond the threshold of childhood). Unlike the friendly creek, the scrub is hostile, it scratches and tears at him "as though it would hold him back" (4). When Pretty Dick begins to fear that he is lost, it is his mother's voice he hears. This association between the child and the mother (securing Pretty Dick's continued status as child/innocent) is juxtaposed with Pretty Dick's appropriation of man-like characteristics; "But he put the feeling

away bravely, swallowed down a lump in his throat, and went on again" (5). Pretty Dick's imitation of manliness, however, only serves to underscore his childish impulse to cry.

Pretty Dick is not permitted re-entry into the adult world. From his vantage point high on a jutting peak he sees Mr Gaunt the overseer on horseback down in the valley. Pretty Dick's coo-ees go unheard and "the departure of the presence of something human felt like a desertion" (6). The last semblances of Pretty Dick's innocence are shattered when it becomes clear that he is lost and abandoned. Familiar tropes of the lost child narrative are employed with a brutal intensity; the mocking cry of "a hideous black crow", the only "living thing" around him, signals his aloneness, as well as his eventual fate. Childhood is irretrievably lost: "No more mother's kisses, no more father's caresses, no more pleasures, no more flowers, no more sunshine – nothing but grim death waiting remorselessly in the iron solitude of the hills" (7). Lost innocence, it appears, is tantamount to death itself. Or, taking the equation further, death brings maturity. Clearly, the significance of such a symbolic economy extends beyond bush-lost children narratives in the Readers' story of national growth. Lost innocence, death and dying are also integral to the nation's rite of passage.

Like "Pretty Dick", an excerpt from Henry Kingsley's *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn*, in *Queensland School Readers Book V* also explores the bush-lost child narrative as well as the symbolic interrelationship between death and lost innocence. In the Queensland Reader the tale appears in two parts, as "How the child was lost" and "How the child was found". The same story appears in *The New Australian School Series Third Reader* (the NSW series), where it is called "A lost child".⁴ Just as in "Pretty Dick", the eight year-old protagonist of this story leads an isolated, solitary existence, the child of a shepherd and his wife. He is clearly a native-born son, "a strange wild bush child [...] and yet beautiful to look on; as active as a roe, and, with regard to natural objects, as fearless as a lion" (17). Like the suntanned and manly boy in Pretty Dick, this child's superior physical attributes

and courage mark him as a product of a young and virile nation. Kingsley's wild child, perhaps in mapping out the visual and literary tracks other bush-lost children will inevitably follow, is sorely tempted by the forest across the river. As Pierce observes, "This is one of the earliest, and – for later writers – perhaps the most influential of all the colonial narratives of the lost child" (14). At the end of summer, when the river is low, the child undresses and, carrying his clothes, he wades through to the other side: "And there he stood free in the forbidden ground" (19). In a striking exemplification of the over-arching metanarrative of national growth, the child plays out a crude re-enactment of discovery and colonisation. Here, in this foreign and forbidden landscape, is a "new kingdom, rich beyond his utmost hopes" (19). In a language resonating with terms familiar from exploration notebooks and diaries, "he would *penetrate* this region, and see how far it extended" [emphasis added] (19). Dreaming of the stories he will have for his father, suggesting the kind of relationship between Australia and the "mother land" examined in the next chapter of this study, the child longs to show the parent the wonders of the new land: "Perhaps he would build a new hut over here, and come and live in it!" (19).

Inevitably though, the child is lost. Returning to national anxieties as performed via these kinds of narratives, and re-performed via the function of the school Reader, a kind of double inscription, the story anatomises the child's terror and madness. "Then he broke down, and that strange madness came on him which comes even on strong men when lost in the forest; a despair, a confusion of intellect, which has cost many a man his life. Think what it must be with a child!" (20). Evoking the nightmare later shared by Pretty Dick, the child walks further into the mountains "and when the solemn morning came up again he was still tottering along the leading range, bewildered; crying, from time to time, 'Mother! Mother!' still nursing his little bear, his only companion, to his bosom, and holding still in his hand a few poor flowers he had gathered the day before" (20).

In the second part of the story, reproduced as “How the Child was Found” in the Queensland Reader, the narrative’s focalisation shifts to the men charged with searching for the lost child. Unlike “Lost in the Bush” or other stories of bush-lost children where tracking efforts are a cause for hope, if not celebration, Kingsley has his trackers despondent at the outset. “They knew what a solemn task they had before them; and, while acting as though everything depended on speed, guessed well that their search was only for a little corpse, which, if they had luck, they would find stiff and cold under some tree or crag” (21). Like other stories of lost children, the usual traces of Aboriginal presence and absence complicate the narrative and its relationship to a larger story of national growth. His mother suggests that the boy has crossed the river because he had seen children playing over there: “She, knowing well that they were fairies, or perhaps worse, had warned him solemnly not to mind them; but that she had very little doubt that they had helped him over and carried him away to the forest” (22). It is unclear whom or what might be worse than fairies but it is possible that the mother refers to Aboriginal children.⁵ Read in this way, the story suggests that an Aboriginal presence informs white Australian anxieties about belonging. It is significant then, that unlike other narratives of lost children, there are no “black trackers” involved in the recovery of the child. Instead, Cecil and Sam rely on brave dog Rover to take up the trail “like a bloodhound” (22). Like Pretty Dick, the child is found “dead and stiff” (24). As Susan K. Martin argues, this ending (the discovery of the child by the “better-orientated settler men”), does offer a particular kind of closure that is common to many white lost child stories, stories that can be read as recuperative. “They release a fear of an uncanny, unmapped, unmappable landscape only to write it into a story in which the bush is made to give up its secret (the child, the space, the track), and an ending provides closure: the landscape is re-told as mapped” (85).

In “Lost in the Bush” though, in *The Victorian School Readers Fourth Book*, the landscape ultimately remains an uncanny and unmapped space.⁶ Its secret, three missing children, is given up only to the dispossessed Australian Aboriginal men called in to translate. “Lost in the Bush” is particularly important to the Australian

narrative tradition of lost children, both in its construction as a true story (and therefore a legitimate account of settlement), and as a perennially popular tale (we were still watching a filmic version at school in the 1980s). Yet the story, despite being so fundamental to the tradition, disrupts it in some fundamental ways. Superficially at least, as Pierce observes, the story “might be regarded as untypical [...] for it had a happy outcome” in that survival of the children and reunification of the family are celebrated (16). What Pierce does not adequately explore, however, is how, ultimately, the kind of recuperative ending described by Martin is doubly disavowed. While the children do survive, they are certainly no longer innocent, and in the Readers’ version of events, though the family appears to be reunified, the lost child Jane is handed to one of her rescuers before she is embraced by her father. Although narrative closure would seem to provide thematic and moralistic significance in ensuring that goodness is rewarded and innocence protected, the contradictoriness of the topos, particularly as it can be read across school Readers, suggests something far more complicated and unsatisfying. Drawing again on Martin’s analysis of a lost child episode in Joseph Furphy’s *Such is Life*: “As the successful reader of traces here, and as a representative of an extensive tradition of “Black trackers” in lost child stories, [the tracker] casts doubt on the possibility of non-Aborigines reading the landscape and, by extension, of settlers being capable of reading those narratives of place and nation, or national fiction, in which [Jane] is figured as future heroine” (80).

An omniscient narrator opens “Lost in the Bush” with a description of place, locating the story “among the mallee” at the back of Spring Hill Station, near Horsham, where “the dreary view was broken only by the summit of Mount Arapiles and the Mitre Rock” (60). The geographical specificities confirm the narrative’s claims to authenticity. The three child characters are introduced with careful emphasis on their ages - “Isaac, nine years old; Jane, seven and a half; and Frank, a toddler, not four” - as the childhood innocence of the protagonists drives both story elements and narrative significance (60). As the text is largely focalised through the child figures, the children Isaac, Jane and Frank invite reader

identification. They embody one aspect of that which is valued in the Readers' discourse of children and childhood, that aspect explored in lost children stories, a naturalised and cherished state of goodness and naiveté. When their mother sends them on an errand into the scrub to collect broom, they "set off merrily" (60).

Like *Pretty Dick* and Henry Kingsley's lost child, the Duff children are initially represented as happy and carefree in the bush. They have a "fine time", Isaac climbing trees, Jane picking flowers as well as chasing lizards for Frank (60). The bush is inviting and hospitable. After lunch there is "quite a feast of gum from a clump of wattle-trees" (61). Yet as they turn toward what they think is the way home, the children become lost. It is important then, to note that the Duff children do not cross any actual or symbolic threshold in their wanderings. Certainly they are confused and frightened, but they appear to remain safe in the sanctity of childhood. The narrative does not present a crossing place and it is because they do not transgress a boundary that they are eventually, however unsatisfactorily, restored to the family group. This is not to argue that the unknown is a less formidable force than in other lost children narratives such as *"Pretty Dick"*. In the tradition of the broader genre (to which the Duff story is so integral), a sense of the Duff children's aloneness is heightened as the narrative continues. Particularly suggestive of their vulnerability is the "sad 'caw! caw!' of a crow, winging its homeward flight", the only answer to the children's shouts and cooers for their parents (61-2).

When the sun sets and the bush grows "gloomy and still", the children huddle together at the foot of a tree to say the prayers they have been taught by their mother (63). *Pretty Dick* also prays, but his prayers to God indicate a hopeless sense of abandonment rather than the clearly romanticised portrayal in the Duff retelling. Frank cries himself to sleep, Jane as surrogate mother makes him a pillow from broom, and the narrator interjects to emphasise the desperate plight facing the innocents: "Poor, dear little things!" (63). Here, the ideological production of children becomes more explicit as the reader is afforded deeper psychological

insights into Jane's behaviour. Awake, she lies "listening to the cry of the curlew", courageous and vigilant against the unknown dangers of the night (63). Such vigilance ensures that when she is finally found, her moral fortitude (and therefore her innocence and chastity) have triumphed. Her protectiveness and selflessness, taking "off her frock to wrap round her little brother", is represented as reflective of a social reality where women nurture and (particularly in terms of Christian rhetoric), where the strong protect the weak.

The story sequence ends with what can be read as an address to the reader. The moralising tone is consistent with narrative strategies of a common genre in children's literature, the fable or legend, where a lesson is to be learned at the conclusion. The final paragraph is temporally removed from the action of the story's events. Time passing, it appears, allows the narrator to provide insight into the most important element of the narrative's significance. Therefore, readers are positioned to accept an adult-like, overt comment on social and moral value systems; "Jane's motherly attention to her little brother has won for her a place among the world's noble girls" (69). In the accompanying Reader notes to this text, it is acknowledged that "the main part of the story is from an account written by the Reverend P. W. Fairclough, and printed in a church magazine *The Southern Cross*" (166). The origins of the text explain the representation of Jane as an almost saintly heroine. In the notes, readers are directed to consider what they think of Jane's conduct. Tellingly, there is no mention of her brothers, nor of the Aboriginal trackers who locate the children, and who therefore ensure their survival.

Metaphorically, however, the significance attributed to Jane, as female and surrogate mother, is her symbolic purpose as the reproductive site that will ensure the nation's continued innocence and therefore, its very future. As Pierce has rightly observed, there is a sexual undercurrent to the Jane Duff story (27). There is temptation in playing in the wilderness, and yet it is dangerous. The "dismal howl, now and then, of a dingo in the distance", a hunter in search of prey, reinforces notions of Jane's especial vulnerability (63).

The solicitude for Jane in particular is harder to explain unless perhaps one guesses that an aspect of the feverish relief at her preservation was the allaying of sexual anxiety at what might have befallen her, that is, satisfaction at how her chastity had also survived the ordeal. Even after her struggles in the wilderness, Jane emerged an intact young Australian maiden. (Pierce 20)

Providing an interesting comparison with the Jane Duff story, themes of sexual anxiety and a corrupted Australian innocence are more explicit in Barbara Baynton's "The Chosen Vessel". The potential fate of Jane, the destruction of her innocence, is realised in Baynton's short story in which a woman alone in the bush is raped and murdered by a swaggie. Thematic undercurrents are revealed in the stories' parallels. Particularly significant is the warning inherent in "The Chosen Vessel". In "Lost in the Bush", Jane Duff lies awake listening to the cries of a curlew as she maintains her vigilance against the night. In "The Chosen Vessel", the cries of the curlews provide the connection between the sexual and the sacred, as they reiterate the besieged woman's final cry of "murder", after a passerby and potential rescuer has mistaken her for a holy vision.⁷

Both stories are constructed where the sexual (and therefore the reproductive site of the nation) and the sacred intersect. Sacredness I read in terms of both the religious themes of the stories, as well as sacred symbols, signs or codings of national growth, particularly ideas about innocence and legitimacy at the genesis of a national story. There is an overt association between the bush mother and the Virgin Mother in "The Chosen Vessel", that, when read in concert with the unflinching representation of her fate, provides a counter-discourse to sacred myths of Australianness. The bush itself and the masculine embodiment of Australian heroism, the swaggie or bushman, cannot be read as innocent (nor then can the nation) as they are revealed as complicit in the murder of the woman.

"A New Year's Day Adventure" is a far less convincing and accomplished lost child narrative when compared with either "Lost in the Bush" or "Pretty Dick". Primarily,

this can be attributed to its generic adherence to the children's "adventure" story, where there is less emphasis on the psychological state of the lost child and a greater interest in the action of the adventure itself. The story appears in *The Victorian Readers Fourth Book* along with "Lost in the Bush" (its original place of publication was the New South Wales School Magazine). Although the narrative itself is fanciful and flimsy, it is significant in that it does attempt to replicate aspects of popular lost children imagery and symbolism, therefore reiterating the importance of discourses of childhood innocence in terms of themes of Australian growth.

In this story Willie, the motherless son of a cattle drover, accompanies his father and nine other drovers from far north Australia to western New South Wales because his father "did not like to leave the boy alone" (54). Thus, twelve-year-old Willie remains an innocent, in need of a father's protection and watchful eye. Indeed, Willie does appear child-like in his pleasure listening to the drovers' stories by the campfire at night and the language of the narrative itself reinforces a simplistic, childish view of the world: "the stars above in the sky looked very big and bright as Willie lay wrapped in his rug, staring up at them before he fell asleep" (55). Willie's crossing of childhood boundaries then is a deliberate and somewhat transgressive act, following the narrative structures and significations of Kingsley's "How the Child was Lost" or Clarke's "Pretty Dick". Willie leaves the cattle track to ride across the plain when he tires of walking his horse behind the herd and just as in "Pretty Dick", the narrator prophesies the story's development: "but he was not afraid of getting lost" (55). Naturally, Willie is soon to find himself in unfamiliar territory. After a fall from his pony he is left on foot, out of sight of the drovers, and alone. Like other lost children, Willie believes he will find his way back. Indeed, a powerful marker of lost children narratives is the emphasis on the faith of the protagonists when they begin the trek back to the initial safe boundary of their childhood domain, their hopeful anticipation at returning home. As metanarrative sign, this misplaced faith in the sanctity of a white innocence is highly ambivalent. While the child stumbles blindly through an *unknown*, potentially lethal landscape, innocence is always, irrevocably corrupted.

When the sun goes down Willie reaches “the bank of a broad, deep river” (56). The overstated symbolism of the river represents yet another boundary. Rather than crossing, Willie climbs up and sleeps in a tree near the river to awake at daybreak to discover a crocodile at the foot of the tree. He is only saved when two Aboriginal men kill the crocodile and lead him back to the drovers. (An aspect of lost child mythology relies more often than not on “black trackers” who negotiate their homelands, a stolen landscape, in the search and discovery of lost children.) Just as in “Lost in the Bush”, however, the Aboriginal characters in “A New Year’s Day Adventure” are largely silenced. The representation of Aboriginal peoples in these narratives, where Aboriginal heroism is either understated or simply subsumed into the story as the natural “way of things”, is symptomatic of an Australian condition of forgetfulness and selectivity that is inscribed in the Readers. Such a construction of Australia’s indigenous peoples is necessary for the nation to claim its childhood innocence in terms of mythologising its own growth and development. The (mis)representation of Aboriginal identities that permeates the Readers then, is a far broader and more complex issue than this specific reference to lost children might imply. It is one that will be explored in greater depth in the third chapter of this study.

Ironically then, Willie’s innocence is preserved precisely because of the intercession of those people excluded from stories of Australian national growth. The child as the central purveyor of hope and as the embodiment of the future is restored in line with the Readers’ dominant discourses of children and childhood. “Willie was soon clasped in his father’s arms, and taken in front of him on horseback to the camp” (58). Just as the trope of the bush-lost child is a central coding of school Readers, the figure of the child, especially the lost (and found) child, and the way in which he or she is interwoven with ideas about nation, resonates across Australian fiction. The narrative of the bush-lost child exerts a particularly potent influence in a literary and visual consciousness that, while speaking to both our anxieties and aspirations, is a consistently important way to portray and read a story of national growth.

For instance, at the turn of the century, Joseph Furphy's now-iconic *Such is Life* is, according to Martin, fundamentally concerned with a tropic surface of "tracks, navigating and mapping" (77). For Martin, central to an understanding of the novel's narrative "is the sequence of lost child stories told in chapter five" (79). Martin here is specifically concerned with a reading of Furphy's novel, in which a crucial intersection between narrative and place (as encapsulated in the bush-lost child story) provides a map to the novel as a whole (79). Martin's astute insights are not only relevant to Furphy, however. It is useful to consider the lost child's centrality to the broader corpus of Australian literature "where the lost child stories are narrations about reading and writing; reading the marks left on the ground and environment, and tracing the story of the child" (77).

To take a more contemporary example then, Andrew McGahan's Miles Franklin award-winning *The White Earth* (2004), is specifically concerned with stories of self (both personal and national histories), and undoubtedly, the lost child episode informs such readings. The novel explores notions of belonging and inheritance in relation to what might once have been a grand pastoral narrative during what was, for some, a particularly unsettling political period in Australian history, the recognition of Aboriginal land rights. It is especially significant then that *The White Earth* culminates in a disturbing sequence in which the central child protagonist William becomes lost while searching for what his uncle deems to be the key to his inheritance, a connection with the land itself, or, more profoundly, the ability to *hear* the land and its story. At the behest of his uncle, a man who repeatedly refers to an intimate knowledge of and spiritual connection with the station he now owns, William has been sent out to hear the land speak to him, unbeknownst to his mother or aunt: "You can't lie to me, Will. You feel this country calling. I know you do" (296). While William wanders the station on the way to a waterhole, familiar markers of the lost child narrative surface, a sense of purpose and freedom at the outset, rapidly transformed into a frightening burden. Like Pretty Dick or the boy of Kingsley's story, as every step takes him further from home he wishes for the

presence of his mother “but there was no sign of her or the car, only the hum of flies, and his ear throbbed relentlessly” (300). Completely alone, the sight of a disappearing snake frightens William, and the only sounds he hears are the croaks of birds and the chorus of cicadas. Like the other lost children already examined here, and their relationship to a national imaginary, even as deeper cultural anxieties surface, this narrative is reframed as a rite of passage, whatever its outcome: “It was no use sulking. He had made the decision to grow up months ago. Tottering, he climbed back to his feet” (308).

While lost, William, suffering from a debilitating ear disease, is greeted by ghosts and feverish visions from the station/nation’s past, the madness of an isolated and murderous shepherd, a starved and doomed explorer and, finally, a bunyip whose “great eyes held the memory of all this, and of far more” (316). Ultimately, this creature allows William to read, through it, further traces on the landscape. The bunyip reveals to William the dead original inhabitants of the station, a group of Aboriginal men and boys killed by William’s great uncle. Apart from a frontier narrative of violent race relations, as well as the suppressed memories and histories that this section of the novel represents and explores, this episode reveals the mystery at its heart. It is hardly coincidental that such a revelation occurs while William is lost. After all, as a lost child, he is the ultimate symbol of a nation’s fears, uncertainties, dreams and aspirations. By the same token, it is hardly surprising that the lost child figure (and all that he or she stands for) features so prominently across school Readers.⁸ In contemporary accounts of the significance of the narrative of bush-lost children in relation to national anxieties and identities (highlighted by Peter Pierce’s and Kim Torney’s studies for example), it is interesting to note that those often cited as seminal texts (“Pretty Dick”, “Lost in the Bush” and the excerpt from *Geoffrey Hamlyn*) are all reproduced in School Readers, in turn exposing how broader cultural understandings are magnified in these institutional texts.

Proving himself a man – the brave boy

Brave boys as constructs of a mythic Australian masculinity provide further evidence of a national celebration of youth and vitality, always encoded signs of national growth. The literary production of these boys, poised at different points along the threshold of manhood (some prove their manliness more effectively than others) is a revealing thematic concern of the Readers, suggesting as it does the calibre of the man as “hero” required to “lead” the nation. In her reading of Wally and Jim in the popular Australian Billabong series, Margot Hillel identifies the key significances and effects of the “boy hero”. Her distillation of this mythology is equally appropriate to a Reader metanarrative in which: “The myth of the hero is allied with a number of other myths like heroism, that is manly and associated with mateship, and the importance of the Australian bush in developing these characteristics” (Hillel 74). In school Readers, “An Adventure with the Blacks”, “A Brave Boy”, “An Adventure with a Snake”, and even “The Drover’s Wife”, all explore in strikingly similar ways what Hillel identifies as the important intersection between the Australian bush and a heroic rural masculinity in Australian children’s literature.

“An Adventure with the Blacks”, published in *The Victorian Readers Fifth Book*, is narrated by an adult as he retells a childhood “adventure”.⁹ The story is focalised through a child protagonist, the narrator’s younger self. The man as narrator, however, knowingly imbues this account of the past with the mythical qualities of Australian masculine identity, specifically notions of the fearless and adult-like rural lad. “I was only nine years old at the time, but had been brought up to fear nothing” (2). The narrative opens as the boy and his father travel homeward from a 150-mile journey for food supplies. The journey is largely uneventful until, about thirty miles from home, they stop at a Glenisla station to learn that “the blacks had stolen about two hundred sheep, taking them in the direction we were to travel the next day” (3). Although “such a big tribe” frightened the shepherds off from following, “we decided to push on and risk what might happen” (3). It is significant that the narrator depicts himself as already beyond the threshold of childhood through the use of the pronoun “we”, suggesting that the boy is his father’s equal

and a partner in decision-making. About fifteen miles later the pair see the smoke of an Aboriginal campsite ahead. As Hillel suggests, discourses of heroism often intersect with discourses of race (74). Indeed, this brave boy is defined entirely by his courage in facing the Aboriginal “savages” amid a scene of absolute wildness that further underscores a construction of the Aboriginal person as wild, uncivilised.

We were now in a forest of box timber, and the reader can imagine the wildness of the scene – no settlements, no help from anywhere should we need it, nothing but a wild bush track, with the blue sky above, and the screeching of parrots to break the stillness as they flew from tree to tree, and hundreds of native fires not far off to warn us of the danger ahead. (3)

“Bloodthirsty yells from hundreds of voices” alert the travellers that they have been spotted (3). As the Aboriginal people talk together, the narrator addresses his audience directly: “You will understand that those seconds were not happy ones for the man and boy who stood awaiting their decision” (4). In this way, the narrator positions his audience to read the unfolding events as the naturalised state of things, the way things simply must be understood. Despite referring to himself in the third person as a “boy”, the narrator re-establishes his claim to a more manly, heroic status when he advises his father on the best course of action to take. “I implored my father not to shoot, as I knew only too well that, had he done so, they would have speared us to death” (4). Indeed, after his father puts down his gun “the blacks, who were in the act of throwing their spears, at once put them down and walked up to us” (4).

After negotiating with the Aboriginal “king” Jim Crow (via sugar and tobacco as well as offers of a bullock), father and son depart in what the narrator describes as a “race for life” (5). Interestingly, the narrator’s adult experience allows him to reflect on the life-threatening danger he faced as a child, distancing himself from the child audience in that only the experienced can truly “know” but more significantly, reinforcing his claims to hero status. “A run for life along a good metalled road of

to-day would be no laughing matter, but what it was then, through the wild bush, only one who has experienced it can know" (5). The accompanying notes to "An Adventure with the Blacks" provide further detail to ensure its reception as truth. "The passage is taken from the diary of Mr. Samuel Carter, whose father was an early settler in the Wimmera, which was then (in the early forties) a part of the Port Phillip district of New South Wales. The events described took place near Longerenong (see map)" (194). The notes to the text also ask students to consider the question, "Were the blacks fairly treated by early settlers in general?" (194). Given that the normative work of this text effectively silences and excludes the nation's indigenous peoples (where they are represented as primitive, bloodthirsty thieves, even murderers), the reading apparatus of the school Reader appears to be positioning students to accept such exclusion as "fair treatment" in relation to an inscribed metanarrative of national growth.

Clearly, the child protagonist here cannot be read as innocent (in opposition to the depiction of Pretty Dick for example). Rather, he is represented as negotiating the threshold into adulthood in another of the Readers' dominant discourses of children and childhood, the child who will lead, where the child's growth is symbolic of the nation's growth. In this narrative it is the child who literally leads the father (he is after all the one who instructs his father on the best way to negotiate with the Aborigines) and therefore, he can be read as both child and man integral to the nation's future.

Similarly, "A Brave Boy" in *The Adelaide Readers Book II* records a young Australian boy's encounter with a group of hostile natives, though its outcome is not nearly so triumphant. Indeed, the fate of the story's hero is prefigured in the introductory passages where an authoritative narrative voice reveals the kind of violence that characterised early settlement in some parts of Australia: "Sometimes settlers were robbed and even killed by them [Aboriginal Australians]" (130). It is ominous then that the hero of "A Brave Boy", thirteen-year-old Frank Hawson, is part of a pioneering family settling "that wild country", the area around Port Lincoln (131).

When left alone in the hut while the rest of the family are working out on the station, the ever-present threat of “fierce and warlike” Australian Aboriginals soon reveals itself (130). “Suddenly a noise made him look out of the door of the hut, and, to his surprise, he saw twenty-two natives, who had silently crept up, and were holding their spears ready to throw at him” (131). Frank is struck by a spear in the chest but, it seems, justifiably retaliates when he takes up his father’s gun and shoots one of the blacks. Significantly, Frank’s courage, like Samuel Carter’s, is dependent on the construction of Aboriginal peoples as violent and ignorant. The “blacks” in this story are “too afraid to face one white boy with a gun” (132). The literary production of a young and white Australia, the brave boy himself, requires the erasure of an older black presence, which is necessarily depicted as malevolent and primitive.

It is Frank’s story that survives. Despite his injury, the boy lives another eight days, and so is able to share the story with his parents; the story here preserved in third person narrative voice (with all its connotations of authority and impartiality): “He was buried in the scrub, and more than sixty years afterwards, when a railway was being built from Port Lincoln to the outback country, his grave was found. This reminded people of the story of brave little Frank Hawson, and a monument to his memory now stands on the hillside near his home” (132-3). The story and its significance are further established as a memorial to early settler bravery with its publication in a school Reader.

Another brave boy clearly poised on the brink of manhood provides the focalising child figure in “An Adventure with a Snake” (published in *The Victorian Readers Fifth Book*).¹⁰ Just as Samuel Carter represents himself as “manly” by virtue of his experience of rural Australian life in “An Adventure with the Blacks”, Hector, the hero of this story, is also defined by characteristic rural masculinities: “During his short experience of the back country he had learnt many things, this amongst others, and now it saved his life: never to jump up quickly when wakened up by something unexpected” (32). Hector’s physical similarity to the Australian national hero is

emphasised, “every muscle was tense and ready for action” (33). Equally important, Hector demonstrates a mental tenacity that can be attributed to his education in the bush. Although Hector’s body is wet with perspiration, “because of the terrible strain he was under”, he remains calm and stoic, resisting the urge to scream when he is woken by a deadly snake coiled below his chest (33).

“What shall I do?” Hector asks his father. The question shifts the narrative’s focus to the responsibility of the father/adult man as protector, and to some degree, it locates Hector somewhere between childhood and adulthood. “For a full minute Fenn did not answer. This was as terrible a danger as had yet faced the lad, more terrible in fact because it was more difficult to face... It was a cold-blooded peril” (33). As Hector reflects on other adventures which “at least they had been able to meet [...] with courageous action”, he realises “how inexpressibly dear this lad was to him, this son of his, this tested, manly mate of his” (34). Significantly, Fenn elevates his son beyond childhood; he recognises Hector as a manly equal and “mate”.

Generic expectations of the boys’ adventure story demand the same kind of psychological strength in Fenn, the boy’s only hope. (This story is indeed an excerpt from Conrad Sayce’s *The Golden Valley*, an adventure book for boys.) Naturally then, Fenn’s hesitation passes and he directs his son “in a calm, matter-of-fact voice” (34). Emotion is not permitted to cloud clear-headed thinking and decision-making in the isolated male domain of the Australian outback. As Fenn begins counting down, narrative focalisation shifts back to Hector as he lies ready to leap out of bed as his father aims to strike the snake with a stick. “His muscles were like high-tension steel springs at full compression, and they responded in a flash” (35). This final representation of Hector celebrates his physicality, the proof that though he is still a boy, he is made of the steely stuff of manhood. As Hillel asserts in her reading of Mary Grant Bruce’s male heroes of the Billabong series, a fit and healthy physique is central to mythologies of Australian heroism: “both Wally and Jim, and in particular Jim, are described with an emphasis on the body in terms which give them almost

mythological proportions and which seem to place them in the area of the Homeric hero" (75).

In this story, the snake as signifier is important in a number of ways. Firstly, the colonial adventure story, the tradition to which this narrative belongs, nearly always relies on threatening natives, threatening wilderness or threatening wildlife (or a combination of all three), to initiate an imperialist colonial hero. In this way, the snake merely stands in for the lethal danger of the Australian bush that the hero must overcome. On another level, however, the snake, and its association with the serpent of Eden, stands in for something much more complex. As metanarrative sign, this story ultimately encodes both masculinity and heroism. Not surprisingly then, where the story of Eden fuses the serpent with the feminine, the snake in Sayce's narrative evokes both the monstrous feminine of the bush itself, and the necessary suppression of so-called feminine characteristics within a suitably masculine hero. For the Australian boy then, so the logic follows, mastery of the feminine is essential to his survival and success.

Another boy hero framed in opposition to both the serpent, and indeed, the feminine, is Tommy, the eldest child in Henry Lawson's short story "The Drover's Wife" (*The Victorian Readers Fifth Book*).¹¹ This highly iconic text (it appears in nearly all the reading series under examination here), has already been the subject of sustained literary critique and several rewritings. Usually though, the drover's wife herself is understandably the focus of these readings and revisions. My interest, however, is in the child figure of the story. More particularly, I am concerned with how this narrative plays out the connection between *learned* masculinities and national identities (here embodied in Tommy and his mimicry of these masculinities).

Tommy is introduced as one of "four ragged, dried-up looking children playing about the house" (24). The opening description of the story's setting, an isolated slab and stringy-bark cottage surrounded by a monotonous bush environment,

unequivocally locates the narrative in the Australian literary landscape. The “dried-up” children resemble the natural landscape by which they are indelibly defined; flat country where the bush consists of “stunted, rotten, native apple-trees” interrupted only by “a few sheoaks [...] sighing above the narrow, almost waterless, creek” (24). When the shout of “snake” alerts the drover’s wife, Tommy, “a sharp-faced, excited urchin of eleven”, attempts to appropriate the role of male protector, a quasi father figure (24). “Stop there, mother! I’ll have him. Stand back! I’ll have him!” (24). Yet Tommy is merely an imitator of adult masculine identity, comically he carries a stick “bigger than himself” in order to club the snake to death, and although he is reluctant, he does obey his mother’s instructions to come back away from the snake. Although Tommy is a brave boy, he is still a child. He takes a childish pleasure in the appearance of the snake and the excitement its appearance causes, somewhat unappreciative of the danger it presents. In contrast, the adult subject of the narrative, the drover’s wife, not only understands the threat the snake presents to her “mere babies”, but she is undoubtedly their protector. She puts the children to bed on the kitchen table (including Tommy, despite his protests) and begins her night-time vigil. Tommy insists “he’ll lie awake all night and smash that snake; he has his club with him under the bedclothes” (26). The explicitly child-like tone of his voice, though, and his childish desire to “smash that snake” suggest his inability to do any such thing. Indeed, near midnight, all the children are asleep. While Tommy demonstrates virtues of the Australian legend (or at least a desire to enact this legend), he is impotent in his inability to overcome neither his mother’s authority, nor to smash the snake itself.

In the early hours of the morning, when the snake finally does emerge, Tommy wakes up as Alligator catches hold of the snake and the drover’s wife begins beating it with her club. “The eldest boy wakes up, seizes his stick, and tries to get out of bed; but his mother forces him back with a grip of iron” (29). Again, a distinction is drawn between Tommy’s brave childish fantasies and the reality of his mother’s protection/power. The story’s conclusion provides the most poignant reminder of Tommy’s innocence as he promises “Mother, I’ll never go droving” (29). The

potential hollowness of such a promise, a child's promise, creates the pathos of the scene. "And she hugs him to her breast, and kisses him; and they sit thus together while the sickly daylight breaks over the bush" (29).

In their reading of this text, Hodge and Mishra argue "The only positive male is Tommy, her eldest son, who professes loyalty to her [the drover's wife] but also has a tendency to violence equal to Alligator's" (169). While Tommy certainly suggests that he is capable of violence (in order to prove his manliness), it is worth noting that he never actually enacts it – for, *unlike* Alligator, he does not come into contact with the snake. Tommy is still only learning the demands of an Australian legend. More than his violent tendencies (or otherwise), the tragedy of Tommy is revealed in his promise to his mother. For, as those familiar with school Readers already know, drovers are powerful figments of the national imagination and Tommy, in his irrepressible desire to *embody* the Australian legend and its concomitant masculinities, will inevitably be forced to both overcome and abandon his mother (and his promise). The contradiction here exemplified in Tommy is only one of a number of contradictions in the story, which more broadly mirror the hypocrisies of gender-assumptions variously inscribed in a metanarrative of national growth. As Hodge and Mishra note, although "The Drover's Wife" is often cited as an iconic nationalist text, it cannot carry the core message of the Australian legend precisely because a woman is at its centre (168). Like the intertextual "The Chosen Vessel" (which I considered earlier), "The Drover's Wife", even if it does not entirely deconstruct the legend in the mode of Baynton's narrative, nevertheless offers a stinging critique.¹² Ultimately, however, the drover's wife effectively protects and saves her son, "the masculine ideal of the legend" (Hodge and Mishra 170). And it is at this point which leads to my consideration of brave girls (and women) and their legitimised (and inevitably regulated) roles in a metanarrative of national growth.

The brave girl – a heroine of hearth and home

There is an important distinction between brave boys and brave girls in relation to the discursive production of children and childhood in the Readers. This distinction,

more particularly as it relates to brave girls, is drawn along the lines of gender. Inevitably, the courageous deeds of Australian heroines are intrinsically linked to the responsibilities of hearth and home.

“A Brave Australian Girl” appears in both the Tasmanian and Victorian Readers (the Tasmanian Reader having reproduced the Victorian version of the story).¹³ The title “A Brave *Australian* Girl” (my emphasis) locates the narrative within a specific sociocultural context. Thus, Grace is presented as part of the national rural landscape and heritage. From the outset of the narrative, her geographic location (near Cape Leeuwin in Western Australia), reference to her early settler parents and her participation in farm life “taking her share in most of the work that had to be done” (*Tasmanian Reader Grade IV* 6), suggest a girl who is capable and useful outside of the domestic sphere. In her article “Miss Free-and-Easy Versus Prunes and Prisms: The Depictions of Heroines in Some Early Australian Family Stories”, Kerry White explores how the “real” Australian girl is distinguished from others as a uniquely Australian literary creation and why such a creation was culturally important: “This link between the land and girl heroines tends to highlight one of the reasons why a definition of the real Australian girl was important in the past [...] The Australian girl was looked to as representative of a young nation’s potential, she was a chance for new beginnings” (White 137). Grace is presented as a uniquely Australian heroine in that she fulfils certain aspects of a bush mythology – her link to the land is emphasised through the physical prowess she demonstrates in the ability to ride a horse and muster stock – and more importantly, like anyone of the bush, she has the ability to act decisively and courageously. She represents the future. To differing degrees, Grace’s fictional counterparts include Judy Woolcot from *Seven Little Australians*, Lennie Leighton from *Teens* and Norah Linton of the *Billabong* books.

Significantly, Grace’s isolation is made explicit early in the text. “The farmhouse was a long distance from any town. No other farmhouse could even be seen from it” (6). While this isolation is integral to the ensuing tale of bravery, locating Grace on

the outskirts of society (as represented by town and farmhouses as sites of domestic activity) also allows her to be “written into” a narrative more fitting a male hero. Indeed, Grace is acting well outside domestic confines. She is searching for stray cattle, when she sees a ship in distress and begins galloping toward it. The speed with which Grace responds to the situation, even the notion that she gallops (suggesting superior horsemanship and degrees of rural experience) evoke those courageous characteristics more usually associated with boys’ adventure stories.

Peter Musgrave’s observation, though, about the prevalence of gender stereotypes in the Readers is borne out when Grace is ultimately put back in her place (“To Be An Australian” 46). As a heroine (rather than a hero), Grace is not permitted to step entirely out of gendered boundaries, despite her display of masculine-like bravery during her triumph over a “rough” and “angry” sea (6). Grace saves every person on board the flailing ship with help from her nameless Aboriginal servant. Yet the narrative does not close there. Rather, the realm of domestic responsibility, a motherly duty, intrudes. “Wet and tired as she was, she still had something more to do. The people whom she had saved from death were much in need of food, and ought to be provided with shelter before night came on. So Grace, without giving herself time for rest, rode home for help” (7). More than just defining Grace as a girl before a heroine, this passage also denotes Grace’s transition to womanhood itself. The inevitable fate of female heroines in early Australian children’s literature is taken up by Sharyn Pearce in “Literature, Mythmaking and National Identity: The Case for *Seven Little Australians*”. In exploring the links between myths of national identity and children’s literature (specifically Ethel Turner’s *Seven Little Australians* and the demise of Judy), Pearce demonstrates that while Australian children’s writing allowed girls considerably more freedom than the colonial novels they eventually replaced, girls were “still confined to the verandahs” (15). Just as Judy’s death neatly removes her from the male domain of the bush, Grace is ultimately returned to the responsibilities of home and hearth in the Tasmanian and Victorian versions of “A brave Australian girl”.

The version of Grace's story as it appears in *The Adelaide Readers Book V* offers an interesting counterpoint to her representation in the Victorian and Tasmanian Readers. Most importantly, the relationship between heroism and gender roles remains at least partly contradictory and unresolved. In this version, Grace is initially located within domestic confines. Indeed, she is "busy in the kitchen of her station home in preparing for the celebration of her mother's birthday" when a half-caste stockman arrives with the information that nearby, a ship is caught in a storm (106). It is significant that in this story it is in fact the stockman (named Sam Isaacs here) who has seen the ship and subsequently acted to effect a rescue. Yet, from this point on, Grace is represented as an idealised kind of bush heroine and the narrator goes to some lengths to position Grace thus:

But who is it that appears on the cliff? A man's figure certainly, and a girl, a mere slip of a girl! Is that all? No other brawny, powerful arm to throw a rope or seize an oar? Hope dies, the wretched survivors clutch more desperately at the creaking wreckage. But see! The girl is in the lead! Into the sea she comes, she comes! Hope on, ye suffering ones, for a brave unbeaten spirit urges that girlish rider, and help comes at topmost speed! (108)

Towards the narrative's close, Grace has been transformed into the brave Australian girl of the story's title while Sam is merely "her helper" (109). Like the Jane Duff story in the Victorian Reader, particularly important is this story's address to child readers at its end, "that all heroines do not belong to the days of long ago, but that just an Australian girl, like you who read this story, may write her name upon the page of history" (109).

Like "A Brave Australian Girl", "A Rescue" (*The Victorian Readers Fifth Book*) produces a strong and resourceful heroine only to reduce her to a symbolic sacrifice at the close of the narrative. One of Turner's contemporaries in Australian children's writing, Mary Grant Bruce, wrote the children's book from which "A Rescue" is drawn.¹⁴ In this narrative Possum takes charge of a perilous situation when a small child Garth leaps into an old dinghy which, dislodged from its mooring, carries him away on a swift current. As Possum attempts to loosen another boat in order to

follow Garth, she is proactive and decisive, and as though to confirm her “manly” profile, as she works, the heroine “abuse[s] Tom’s knots under her breath” in a most unladylike manner (79).

Like Grace Bussell, Possum’s physicality is pronounced: “her arms never ceased their rapid, mechanical strokes – under the thin blouse her muscles rose and fell as she opened her shoulders with long, powerful swings” (79). In contrast, Garth’s mother Aileen, appears as the stereotypically ineffective English “lady” introduced in Australian literature to demonstrate the superiority of colonial girls and women when compared with their European counterparts. Aileen cannot row “decently” nor can she remain calm in the crisis: “For an instant Aileen lost her head in her agony of terror. She screamed, starting half up” (81). Significantly, it is the younger and socially inferior Possum (Possum addresses Aileen as “Missus”), who takes charge of Aileen, sternly directing her to “sit down!” (81). Possum’s voice is characterised by a rough Australian slang: “ain’t he sittin’ still?” My word, he’s good! He’s got enough sense for ten!” (80). The inversion of the social order signified by her remonstrations with Aileen also references an anti-authoritarian Australian mythology, embodied by cultural icons such as Ned Kelly and, in terms of a more contemporaneous Australian history, First World War stories of Australian soldiers who not only knew better than their English officers, but were brave enough to say so.

The sinking of Garth’s boat, the climax of the narrative, requires a swift and courageous response from the heroine. Possum sees that “there’s one chance -----”, and so, screaming at Garth to jump, she dives after him (81). While Possum does reach Garth, in a reiteration of the divide between the mythical bush heroine and other women, Aileen’s “helpless ignorance” means that her attempt at rescuing them with the boat is unsuccessful. When Aileen’s husband and Possum’s father providentially arrive, “Possum was paddling feebly with one hand, almost done” (83). Yet Possum has the strength for a final sacrifice when she meets her father’s eyes: ““Take Garth’, she gasped” (83). Although Possum’s father actually takes hold

of both children, the sacrificial female has been clearly foregrounded. Just as Jane Duff took off her dress for her brother's protection (or more dramatically, just as Grace Bussell risks her own life to save others), the ideological construct of an Australian heroine's selflessness lends a supportive framework to this scene. In placing the boy's life above hers, Possum demonstrates the most pure kind of heroic deed, but not necessarily one that is especially shocking. In a metanarrative of national growth, Possum's decision to accept her own death before Garth's represents the ultimate female responsibility to the nation: reproductive duty.

There are no shipwrecks or near drownings in an excerpt from Ethel Turner's *The Family at Misrule* (published in both Tasmanian and Victorian reading books).¹⁵ Yet the same discursive production of brave girls operates in its construction of the female as she is defined by a national growth dependent on the social structure of home and hearth. This excerpt, published as "Poppet's visit to the school", in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade IV* and in *Queensland School Readers Book IV* (alternatively titled "The Champion" in *The Victorian Readers Fifth Book*), is the same in each reading book except for an editorial introduction that accompanies it in the Tasmanian and Queensland versions. This introduction outlines the context of the narrative (the events leading up to and surrounding it), but it also directs readers toward the significance of the narrative, a brave girl's devotion to her brother. "The faithful little soul believed him; and in what follows we have an account of her brave attempt to clear his character in the eyes of his teacher" (*The Tasmanian Readers Grade IV* 100).

The narrative introduces its heroine as "a little, slight girl [...] with a white, small face, great frightened eyes shining strangely, and soft lips very tightly closed" (101). Despite the way in which "her poor little knees were shaking and her poor little heart was beating" Poppet approaches the headmaster's desk (101). Notably, there is great emphasis placed on Poppet's diminutive size, the adjective "little" appears six times in this opening description of her. Her physical adherence to the ideal image of the Romantic child underscores her bravery in facing the dread

headmaster. Clearly, it is Poppet's trust in her brother and her dedication to him that provides her with this courage. Indeed, when Mr Burnham finally coaxes Poppet to speak, "Bunty didn't do it" are the first words she whispers (102). The exchange that follows between the two does little more than to further illuminate "the child's beautiful trust, affection and courage" as Poppet pleads Bunty's case (107).

There is significance, however, in the narrative's closure, particularly in terms of its explicit association between heroines and the domestic realm. The courageous Poppet provides the example by which all good girls should measure themselves, a duty to protect and provide for the nation's sons. While the headmaster does praise Poppet, it is ultimately her influence on her brother that will make the world a better place. "He told them what the child had done, and praised her high courage and simple faith. 'If,' he said, as he took his leave, 'if all boys had such sisters as little Poppet is, my school would be a better place, and later, the world'" (109). One of the texts to appear in both the Tasmanian and Victorian series of reading books, it appears that this narrative's appeal to selection committees can be read in its overt construction of the ideal female child, a child who will not necessarily "lead", but who will undoubtedly support those who do.

Shaped by the bush – producing an ideal Australian child

Of course, other kinds of Australian children populate the Readers. Representations of these children serve to reinforce notions of an ideal, uniquely *Australian* child. Inevitably, this child is a product of the bush. In the Readers, the authenticity of this Australian child gains strength and stature across genres and across individual narratives as the recurrent and inter-related literary themes are unified by one common thread, that of the bush itself. As both a physical landscape and as socio-cultural environment of rural and regional Australia, the bush, and its role in shaping Australian children (particularly its effect on states of childhood) is ever-present.

“Sunrise in the Blue Mountains” (from Louise Mack’s *Teens* and published in *The Victorian Readers Sixth Book*) clearly invokes familiar thematic concerns of childhood innocence, particularly the way in which children negotiate the threshold into adulthood.¹⁶ In this narrative, dreams of youth are aligned with the uniquely Australian landscape: “The five girls were all silent. Their eyes, with the dreams of youth in them, were gazing out into the great, silent stretches of mountains rolling back against the sky” (4). In a desire to witness sunrise from Govett’s Leap in the Blue Mountains, the girls leave home in the early hours of the morning, signifying a physical and symbolic (though a temporary) separation from childhood. “The back gate, when it closed behind them, seemed to shut them out of all reach of the shelter of home” (6). More explicitly, their mother (as protector of this childhood) is unaware that her daughters are “stealing through the piece of rough bush that led down to the road” (6).

As in “Pretty Dick”, there are hints of a sensual seductiveness in the Australian wilderness: “the delicate wild clematis [...] hid the nakedness of the poor old ring-barked trees under its long white arms of blossom” and even the earth underfoot “smell[ed] as if it had just been washed” (6). Unlike *Pretty Dick*, however, these children are not tempted to stray into the bush. Nor are there the sexual anxieties that lie below the surface of the Jane Duff story. The imagery is gentler here than the night cries that assault Jane’s nightly vigil. It is not a story of lost children nor of lost innocence. Rather it is about the way in which Australian children are formed in relation to the landscape. The nationalist authenticity of these girls is celebrated as they discover “the wonder [that] was all new to them – the fair wonder of a mountain dawn” accompanied by billy tea and sandwiches when they are “miles from home in the heart of the Blue Mountains” (9).

White rightly suggests that Mack’s novel *Teens* is ground-breaking in its departure from well-established literary patterns of the early Australian family story. Unlike Mary Grant Bruce or Ethel Turner, as evidenced in the extracts analysed above, Louise Mack “convincingly portrays creative and outgoing girls without resort to

the fictional convention of making such characters misfits, rebels or outsiders [...] The promotion of a set of values for girls (qualities of leadership, truthfulness and courage) are not qualified in any way in this book" (White 135). In *Teens*, White argues, that singularly defining characteristic of Australianess, mateship, is extended beyond its literary manifestation as an exclusively male domain to include girls. In "Sunrise in the Blue Mountains" such a contention is borne out as the five girls plan and undertake their outing together in a spirit of adventurous camaraderie. Like White's reading of the novel itself, this narrative "is a celebration of girlhood unity and ambition" (135). The conclusion to the girls' journey in "Sunrise in the Blue Mountains", a detailed description of a fairytale landscape, reveals a soft and feminised natural environment. In this narrative the literal mother is replaced by a benevolent landscape, allowing the children to step outside the home in relative safety. The girls have a lantern, there is a defined road to follow, and most significantly, they can observe the wilderness (a symbolic adulthood) from a look-out shed. Denoting the girls' protected status, a fence at the head of the Leap separates them from the unknown.

Highlighting the contradictory roles of the bush as a field of signification and its effect upon the literary production of children and childhood, other texts of the Readers represent nature's harsh and unforgiving qualities. This bush environment is not necessarily the monstrous feminine of Kay Schaffer's analyses, but it is certainly wilful and dangerous. In keeping with the feminisation of the bush, however, even a destructive natural environment has the potential to fulfil a maternal role. Though merciless, the bush as mother/educator, ensures that lessons necessary to survival in Australia are learned.

In the texts "Sailor" and "Pincher", leadership traits are cultivated in response to nature's vagaries. Learning experiences in the country can be costly, yet it follows that surviving an education in the bush ensures the development of those characteristics so integral to a national construction of self. "Sailor" and "Pincher", though ostensibly concerned with the loyalty of faithful dogs, are equally revealing

in terms of the ways in which themes of nature are constructed in relationship to the child's path toward adulthood. In both of these fictions, boys taking resourceful, decisive action can thwart impending disaster. These stories re-iterate codings of maleness and leadership born of the ability to navigate the Australian bush.

"Sailor", adapted from *Australian Fairy Tales* by Atha Westbury, appears in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade IV* and is set in the countryside.¹⁷ Like lost children narratives, "Sailor" is concerned with the notion of childhood boundaries and the consequences of stepping beyond them. Although Bertie and Tom (aged eight and nine) have been warned not to bathe in the river because of its dangerous undercurrents and hidden snags, in their childish happiness and spirit of adventure they forget the warning. As it happens, the river in question, the Murray, is itself a boundary, as the border between the Australian states of New South Wales and Victoria. Tom and Bertie's trespass against adult boundaries, as well as their lack of appreciation of the formidable entity of nature itself, is nearly fatal when Tom dives from a high bank into the river. It is only Bertie's clear-headedness and the resources of a child educated in the country that save Tom from drowning. "Little Bertie, though in great terror, does not lose his presence of mind" and after enlisting the help of his faithful dog, his cousin is rescued (54).

Similarly, "Pincher" from *Victorian Readers Fifth Book* (originally published in the South Australian school magazine *The Children's Hour*) is set on the Murray River. When two children are marooned on a small island amid rising floodwaters, the efforts of a boy raised in the bush are pivotal to survival. Demonstrating the most important lesson of a bush education, Tom does not underestimate the power of nature. He recognises that unless help arrives soon, he and his sister will be drowned. As a boy, and therefore as a potential leader of the nation, Tom is unwilling to accept such a fate: "'What can I do to get us out of this fix?' Tom said to himself" (167). In a marked contrast with his younger sister who playfully and childishly likens their situation to that of shipwrecked sailors, Tom (acting in a manner that places him closer to adulthood) takes decisive action. Recognising their

beloved dog Pincher as their only hope of rescue, Tom throws Pincher into the current “with all his strength” and with sticks and stones he heads the dog off to the opposite bank where Pincher goes to the farm for help.

Throughout the Readers’ production of Australian children and childhood, the often contradictory role of the bush, as either a malevolent force or as educator (and sometimes as both), is nevertheless the fundamental ingredient to defining national identity and culture. Nowhere is this more apparent than in C. E. W Bean’s “The Youngster”, published in *The Victorian Readers Fifth Book*. “The Youngster” values a bush education as integral to a boy’s transformation into a man and provides the most powerful example of the superiority of bush children versus their city-educated counterparts: “Many of the youngsters along the Darling Bank had not seen much more of the world than this; and they might seem a little simple in the superficial lore of the cities [...] But they could teach the city man for a month things in which he is a babe” (68). Interestingly, Bean’s man/child inversion here is particularly relevant to the Readers’ codings of national growth. The extract, from *The “Dreadnought” of the Darling*, is infused with the mythology of the bushman and the knowledge he can impart.¹⁸ Although rural schools and teachers are somewhat inferior, Bean attests to the value of the men of the “back country” as teachers, “men who, out of an experience that has oftener been wide than happy, can teach the youngster at their feet to make of life perhaps a better success than they themselves have made of it” (69). Anecdotal evidence is proffered to demonstrate how hard work and lessons learned from older bushmen can secure success. Bean relates the story of a man of distinction, taught largely by “two old employees of his father”(69): “For hours together, as they worked, they would give him the best they could of their own considerable knowledge; and it was that masterful instruction which equipped him for his success in the world” (69). Clearly, Bean’s “bush boys” are adept at all those skills necessary to myths of rural masculinity. “He practically always owns a pea-rifle [...] The bush boy can always ride with that peculiar ease which makes him look a part of his horse” and “his eyes are trained so that in some cases, looking down across the plain, he can see a fence when to a city man it is

actually invisible" (69-70). As metanarrative coding, it is this value-laden, rough country lifestyle that has and will ensure the future of the nation in moulding Australia's youth.

Myra Morris's poem in *The Victorian Readers Sixth Book*, "The Bush Schoolboy", is also concerned with the way in which the "real" Australian child is also, inevitably it would seem, a child of the bush.¹⁹ Like the narratives of brave boys (and to some extent, brave girls) previously examined, the bush schoolboy of this poem is defined by his physical presence. Carrying his bag upon a "sturdy back", the bush boy of the poem is "barefooted" (15). In this sense, the superior Australian (marked by his strong and fit body) can be read as being produced by nature. Indeed, he is so at home in this environment that he has no need for shoes. In this way, the boy's bare feet also signify a kind of authenticity, demonstrating that he is undeniably a part of the natural world that he inhabits. The bush schoolboy is reluctant to go to school, instead delighting in nature: "he laughs to feel the cool, crisp grasses crunch beneath his careless feet" (15). His feet are careless because he is at home here, and unlike the bush-lost child narrative, he is "safe" in a natural environment invoked via the popular iconography of the majestic Australian eucalypt. From "beneath a silk-smooth gum" he listens to the wild bees' hum and watches the finches and the tiny tits (17). This bush schoolboy is a white native. As such, a white prehistory is naturalised while Aboriginal peoples, elided by the logic of the new native, are simultaneously effaced. When the schoolboy momentarily contemplates the explorers Hartog, Tasman and Cook, the poem signifies the boy as a child of a new, white nation. He is the inheritor of all that these men "discovered" when their ships pulled in ashore "on some still morn like this" (17).

It is significant that the poem's subject, the "loitering, bare-legged urchin", is often overshadowed by description of the bush and the creatures that dwell therein (17). The poem plays on a popular idea of the country child's contempt for school and books whereby the trappings of a formal education are unnecessary to a bush life. Such a life is, of course, better served by learning in nature's own classroom. The

schoolboy is specifically identified in the title as a *bush* schoolboy, and the narrative of the boy's journey to school is little more than a framework in which to detail the many pleasures of being amidst nature. At the close of the poem, when the boy's thoughts return to "Tasman bold and gallant Cook" he wonders if they ever "sat huddled o'er a thumb'd old lesson-book" (18). This image of the "great" explorers as small schoolboys huddled over their books highlights the pretensions of a school education and reinforces the value of real-world lessons such as those learnt in, and taught by, the bush. More powerfully though, the poem's return to the explorers, usually framed as founders of nation, reiterate the white child's claim to the Australian environment.

"The Old Bush School", a first-person account of early Australian rural education by Mary Fullerton in *The Victorian Readers Fifth Book* also explores the role of the bush in developing uniquely Australian children, the new natives.²⁰ The orderliness and seriousness of school is juxtaposed with a chaotic rural lifestyle: "I thought it lovely to sit in a row; we never sat so at home" (40). Furthering the notion of Australian children literally born of the bush, the children are produced by the natural environment itself: "The gallery was full of children all grown along the creek" (40). Significantly in this sense, the children are likened to stock as they are initially "drafted according to size" (41) and later, more rigorous academic testing can also be read in agricultural terms as the author describes a "period of final winnowing" (42).

Just as in Bean's account of the youngsters of the Darling or Morris's poem about the bush schoolboy, there are clearly two kinds of education in evidence here, the notion of formal school instruction versus bush knowledge. Aware of this dualism, the narrator reflects on the nature of education in rural areas. She notes that an academic test was an examination of parents as much as it was an examination of the children. While some parents had "given their children a good start", others were remiss in their teaching duties (41-2). In rural areas a boy well-schooled in the arts of the bush might have little ability in the school room: "I remember seeing,

with amazement, Jim Speary, one of the brothers who had sawn the wonderful timber, pass from a higher desk to a lower one, amongst lads of seven or eight, to begin his ABC" (42). Interestingly, the other children "read shame in it" (Jim's demotion), suggesting that although it is praiseworthy to be a capable boy of the bush, more formal understandings and values of education remain superior (42). Reminiscences of the school teacher are also revealing. Fair-haired, young and violet-eyed, "bearing youth and hope and vigour in her heart", the teacher embodies the values of formal learning and refinement (43). Although the bush shapes the best specimens of Australia's youth, polishing some rough edges is clearly necessary. In this way, the children of the bush not only exhibit heroic physical characteristics but they also have the advantage of a moral education imparted by traditional school instruction that, like the teacher herself, privileges "heart and hope for humanity" (43).

Assumptions of white indigeneity, explored more fully in chapter 3 of this thesis, figure prominently in Fullerton's story. The idea of the landscape as producer of the nation's children is explicit. "We were a queerly-mixed group of urchins; more of us than one might think from that narrow strip of river flat. It grew children abundantly" (42). Furthering the idea of bush children as indigenous to the Australian environment, the children are also tellingly described as a "little gang of primitives" (42). This is significant in relation to themes of national growth in the *Readers* as it effectively displaces Aboriginal Australians (and their claim to the country) with a new generation of "natives" whose presence will ensure the nation's continuing development and its white national identity.

In all of the texts analysed in this chapter, the central male and female child protagonists, whether innocent or heroic (or both), are marked as Australian because they are produced in concert with the natural environment. The space between innocence and knowingness, almost always bridged by experiences in and of the bush, is central to the *Readers'* constructions of Australian growth. In this

way, the natural environment is intrinsic to an Australian understanding of self and the nation's aspirations in terms of defining and moulding future generations.

Co-opting children for the imaginary

Having identified the dominant discourses of Australian children and childhood that are produced in and through the Readers, I want to turn to a brief consideration of those narratives concerned with children of other nationalities. To this end, I am interested in international constructions of children and childhood, primarily in texts from the Victorian and Tasmanian Readers, and how they are co-opted into codings for an Australian imaginary. A survey of texts reveals three main areas of concern to this study, notions of morality, as well as yet more brave boys and brave girls. Morality tales, narratives of good, generous and loving children often couched in Christian religious terms, are the best represented of all stories of children in the Readers. As Hillel has stated, moral superiority serves as a kind of ideological construction of heroism (77). It is little wonder then that morality tales are so prevalent, given that the literary production of children and childhood in the Readers can be read as emblematic of a new and heroic nation.

"The Sabot of Little Wolff" is published in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade V*, translated from a French story by Francois Coppee. Essentially, this overtly religious story demonstrates the rewards that will be enjoyed by the good and the humble, a central tenet of Christianity. The story's focalised child character, Little Wolff, a poor orphan raised by his heartless old aunt, is "naturally so good" that while other children and adults ignore a beggar child sleeping in the Church porch on Christmas Eve, Little Wolff takes off one of his wooden shoes to leave for the child whose feet are blue with cold. The story's moral is revealed on Christmas morning when a chimney full of gifts rewards Little Wolff's generosity. Conversely, the children of the rich people in the village find only rods in their shoes. The sleeping child of the night before is recognised as the Christ-child and "all bowed themselves before the miracle that the good God had seen fit to work, to reward the faith and charity of a child" (127). There are several such examples of good and selfless

children (and the rewards they receive) in narratives throughout the Readers. The simple faith of another orphan is the subject of “The Guardians of the Door”, from *A Child’s Book of Saints*, published in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade V*. Other narratives reiterate similar themes or codings. “Peter’s Puzzle”, an English story, is published in *The Victorian Readers Fourth Book*, “How the crickets brought good fortune”, another translation of a French story, appears in *The Victorian Readers Fifth Book* and “Cosette”, an adapted excerpt from Victor Hugo’s novel *Les Misérables*, is in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade IV*.

As well as stories of childhood goodness and innocence, representations of brave boys and brave girls are likewise not restricted to Australian texts. “A Fiery Ordeal” in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade IV* and “A Terrible Adventure”, *The Tasmanian Readers Grade V*, reinforce constructions of a truly heroic boy as one who is prepared to do battle with nature itself. Extending beyond themes of national growth, these texts are informed by an imperialist agenda where the English lad is capable of overcoming the dangers of unknown lands in the quest for Empire. In concert with their overt imperial colonialist agendas, these narratives are informed by those literary tropes already examined in relation to brave boys on the threshold of manhood. “A terrible adventure” is a classic boys’ own adventure story written by the popular adventure novelist R. M. Ballantyne. This story is typical of imperialist children’s literature, “adventure stories that romanticized and valorized the exploits of juvenile male empire-builders” (Pearce 112). In this narrative, three boys are stranded on an exotic, deserted island. A fishing expedition on a makeshift raft becomes life-threatening when the boys are attacked by a shark. The leader of the three, however, conceives a daring plan that displays considerable mental fortitude and physical strength – he forces a paddle down the shark’s throat – demonstrating yet again that brave boys are willing to sacrifice themselves for their mates and that courage, aggression, determination and dominance are the true qualities of manhood (Hourihan 3). More importantly, reiterating school Reader codings of national growth, it is apparent that experiences in and of the wilds of nature are the impetus for a boy’s transition into manhood. In her study of the hero story and its

dominance in children's and young adult literature, Margery Hourihan argues "there is a level of psychological allegory in the story which is concerned with the transition from boyhood to manhood, and at this level the monsters represent fears and self-doubts which must be overcome, and in some cases the actual ceremonies of initiation which must be endured, before the boy can call himself a real man" (3). While this is certainly the case, there is more to it when the initiation occurs in a colonial adventure story (where the monsters represent the "Other") and the boy/man embodies imperial power and greatness.

Also striking are the similarities between stories of Australian and other brave (white) girls. "The Soldier's Reprieve" in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade IV* represents an American girl's bravery in defending her brother before the President. Like Ethel Turner's Poppet, the central female protagonist of this story, Blossom, is courageous and loyal, dedicated in her duty to her brother. "The Story of Grace Darling" is published in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade IV*. Its depiction of a girl willing to sacrifice her own life in order to save the survivors of a shipwreck is the same in many respects to the story of Grace Bussell in "A Brave Australian Girl". Indeed, in the fifth book of *The Adelaide Readers*, Grace Bussell is referred to as "the Australian Grace Darling" (109). Most significantly, "A Brave Girl" by Charlotte Yonge, as published in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade IV*, is not only concerned with innocent children abandoned to the mercy of the elements when their parents disappear, it also constructs a saintly heroine who, in many ways, prefigures the portrayal of Jane Duff. Also overtly informed by religious values, "A Brave Girl" mythologises a young innocent's faith and goodness as she cares for her smaller brothers and sisters in an uncertain and frightening time.

Although this brief overview of representations of children of other nationalities is by no means exhaustive, it goes some way toward establishing the parallels between depictions of Australian and other children. In this sense, the Readers' dominant discourses of children and childhood are reinforced and upheld. Despite the children being from literary and cultural traditions other than those of Australia,

these narratives clearly still encode those values that inform a metanarrative production of the “ideal” child as synonymous with an innocent, brave and youthful nation.

Notes:

¹ “Lost in the Bush” has had many manifestations as both a print and visual text. The version that appears in *The Victorian Readers Fourth Book* is based on Reverend P. W. Fairclough’s retelling of the story as it appears in the children’s column of *The Southern Cross*, an Australian weekly religious magazine. According to the notes included in the fourth Reader, “some local details have been added by Mr. Beaumont T. Pearse, who was once a teacher in the Horsham school” (166). For more information about the provenance and the various incarnations of this story, see Torney, 27-29. Marcus Clarke’s short story “Pretty Dick” first appeared in *The Australian Magazine: A Colonial Monthly* in April 1869. It was later reproduced in Clarke’s *Australian Tales*, 1896. “How the Child was Lost” is an extract from Charles Kingsley’s *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn*, first published in 1859. “A New Year’s Day Adventure” was written for the *The School Magazine, New South Wales*. Its author is unknown.

² The emergence of the modern conception of childhood has also been theorized in postcolonial terms. In her article “De-Scribing The Water Babies: ‘The Child’ in Post-Colonial Theory” Jo-Ann Wallace argues that the idea of the child is a necessary pre-condition of imperialism: “That is, that the West had to invent for itself ‘the child’ before it could think a specifically colonialist imperialism” (176). In this way, the construction of children and childhood, the not yet evolved subject, makes thinkable a colonial apparatus for the improvement of colonised peoples. Bill Ashcroft builds upon Wallace’s observations to argue that imperialism contains its own contradictions in the sign of the child and that this is achieved in the concept of paternity and the transfer of the disciplinary regime of education to the colonial subject. Ashcroft writes: “The myth of the child therefore promises the development of the primitive unformed subject into the ‘self’ while at the same time maintaining that subject as the abject other, the object of imperial rule” (47).

³ “Pretty Dick” appears not just in the Tasmanian School Readers. The story is also included in *The Adelaide Readers Book V* as well as in the New South Wales *The New Australian School Series Fourth Reader*. This repetition is significant in what it suggests about the story’s resonances for a narrative of national growth as it appears in Readers across Australia.

⁴ Charles Kingsley’s *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn* was first published in 1859. The story in the Readers is from the thirtieth chapter of the novel: “How the Child was Lost, and How He Got Found Again ...”. The chapter was published separately in Britain in 1871 as an illustrated book for children, titled *The Lost Child* (Pierce 13-14).

⁵ In the NSW version of this story, published in *The New Australian School Series Third Reader*, the mother suggests that the black children playing on the other side of the river are akin to pixies:

“‘Who are the children that play across there?’

‘Black children, likely.’

‘No white children?’

‘No, my child, none but pixies. Don’t go near them; they’ll lead you on and on, nobody knows where’” (73).

⁶ “Lost in the Bush” also appears in *The Adelaide Readers Book II* although it is narrated differently in this version. While recounting the story to his grandchildren, an elderly man gives a first-person account of the children’s ordeal. Despite the suggestion that the narrator knew the Duff children and the story first-hand, the account is of the same provenance as the

version that appears in the Victorian Reader (based on Reverend P. W. Fairclough's narrative). It is likely that the Adelaide story is based on the text published in *The School Paper* (Victoria) in 1908 as "Lost in the Bush" and subsequently republished in the paper in 1923 (Torney 30).

⁷ When Baynton submitted this short story to the *Bulletin* her suggested title was "What the Curlews Cried", highlighting the significance of a religious theme that "fuses the sexual with the symbolic" (Schaffer 155).

⁸ In contemporary children's literature too, the lost child figure continues to appear. In the 1998 sixth instalment of John Marsden's highly successful Tomorrow series, *The Night is for Hunting*, the bush-lost child scene is a moment of heavily-embroidered pathos, cleverly trading on existing literary tropes and expectations of the form. Ellie, the series heroine and substitute indigene, reads the landscape to locate five missing children: "The ground told a story as clear as a Hollywood movie" (Marsden 100).

⁹ This story is from Samuel Carter's autobiography *Reminiscences of the Early Days of the Wimmera*, published in 1911.

¹⁰ "An Adventure with a Snake" is an extract from Conrad Sayce's *The Golden Valley*, published in 1924.

¹¹ "The Drover's Wife" was first published in the *Bulletin* in 1892. This story also appears in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade IV*, *The Adelaide Readers Book V* and in the *Queensland School Readers Book V*.

¹² Importantly, "The Drover's Wife" is a precursor text for "The Chosen Vessel", originally published as "The Tramp" (Hodge and Mishra 168).

¹³ Grace Bussell's story also appears in *The Adelaide Readers Book V* as "An Australian Heroine".

¹⁴ "A Rescue" is from Mary Grant Bruce's *Possum*, published by Ward Lock in 1917.

¹⁵ *The Family at Misrule* was published by Ward, Lock and Bowden in 1895.

¹⁶ Louise Mack's *Teens: A Story of Australian School Girls*, a novel for young adults, was first published in 1897.

¹⁷ *Australian Fairy Tales* was published by Ward Lock in 1897.

¹⁸ C. E. W. Bean's *The "Dreadnought" of the Darling* was originally published in 1911.

¹⁹ "The Bush Schoolboy" was first published in the *Bulletin* in 1927.

²⁰ "The Old Bush School" is an extract from Fullerton's autobiographical *Bark House Days*, published in 1911.

The Imperial Curriculum: Literary Effects of the Mother Country

The figure of the child looms large in the national imaginary. As I argued in the previous chapter, in school Readers, the child acts metonymically for the youthfulness, spirit and optimism of a new Australian nation. Indeed, the child's appearance, disappearance and reappearance are pivotal metanarrative signs. Yet this child figure does not spring fully-formed of the imaginary. Naturally, the child has some kind of past and so too does the imagined national community the child comes to represent. In a story of origins, the child/nation's heritage (or more pertinently, what is celebrated about that heritage) is just as important as a concomitant, limitless future. For Benedict Anderson, the nation-state is conceived as simultaneously both "new" and "historical" (11). So, for a growing-up Australia, where the new nation is represented symbolically in children and childhood, a deep past is located in a particular kind of heroic British heritage. In Readers, the benevolent 'mother country' topos is overt and in its coded repetitions, it is persuasive; deflecting attention, as it does, from alternative beginnings or histories. An overarching story of national growth references a larger, glorious British history, because, as Anderson has already pointed out, in the collective national imaginary, a nation needs a past (11). Or, as Terence Hawkes puts it: "Making history, that is making sense of the past in terms of the exigencies of the present, is a necessary

concern of all societies" (55). While Australian Aboriginal peoples, particularly notions of indigeneity, are also selectively incorporated into stories of self, and this will be explored in the following chapter, my focus here is how the national imaginary evinced in the Readers adopts and adapts British stories and Britishness. More particularly, I am interested in how the mother country is figured in Readers, alongside questions of British history and imperialism, and how, ultimately, a British imaginary both informs, and is informed by, a metanarrative of colonial/Australian growth. To my reading, this is not a simple equation whereby a colonial re-birth inherits a coded genetic history from the imperial power. It is more complicated in the ways the colonial identity is sufficiently flexible to selectively subsume some narratives and not others, and in the ways that these stories can be recoded to signify something new. And, indeed, in enacting the role of Britannia's child the national imaginary serves to re-enact the role of Britannia as mother and reinforce the unity of Empire. Robert Dixon's observation that iterations of imperial power in popular fiction are, in fact, symptom of anxieties about the decline of Empire (2), is echoed across school reading materials (where codings of imperialism include, but are not limited to, the adventure stories that are the subject of Dixon's study). While Dixon, after Patrick Brantlinger, suggests that British adventure tales are the most revealing of all literary forms in terms of anxieties about the end of Empire (8), school Readers offer an even richer and more complex site of imperialist colonial discourses.

Necessarily, in a narrative of national growth, the birth and development of the child are inextricably linked to the mother. The bountiful mother must be acknowledged, and embraced, in order to describe a past that is essential to imagining the future. Ideas of birth, duty and inheritance permeate the Readers in poems of the fertile English countryside, stories of exploration and Empire, representations of a heroic English past and the invocation of Shakespeare as measure of cultural maturation. Discourses of motherhood act in concert across a range of texts and genres to construct a mother to whom the young nation is deeply indebted, not only in relation to its very founding, but in terms of its cultural

understanding of self. Yet, for my purposes here, reading the relationship between England and Australia as *only* that symbolised by the relationship between a mother and her child is rather too limiting. As recent scholarship has shown, it is necessary to move outside of this conventional mother/child, centre/periphery paradigm to properly represent the complexities of imperial/colonial relations. It is particularly relevant here given that the imperial curriculum I explore is produced *in* Australian school Readers, *by* Australian state education departments and selection committees. Of course, many of the texts were originally produced in British school textbooks and simply transplanted into Australian reading series. Regardless, what is pertinent is an understanding of an imperial curriculum as produced by, and in concert with, both a metanarrative of national growth *and* an imperialist ideology. Indeed, in the last section of this chapter, I focus specifically on Australian and other colonial voices responding to what is perceived as the centre. In taking up positions as “Britannia’s children”, colonial perceptions serve to reinscribe and reinforce a British imperial worldview. Yet, at the same time, Britannia’s reliance on these voices to stabilise her own centrality in fact shifts power back to the colonial peripheries.

Some examination of the ambivalence of imperial, colonial and post-colonial relations provides an important theoretical basis for the following discussion. Indeed, underpinning this chapter (along with my broader concern about an encoded metanarrative of national growth), is Edward Said’s observation about the power encoded in the stories we are taught to tell ourselves: “the power to narrate or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them” (2). To borrow Andrew Hassam’s phrase, school Readers are, significantly, part of “an imperial economy” (22). While Hassam is referring to the circulation of credit, produce and people, I think the phrase and its connotations are equally applicable, and useful, in this literary context. Yet I am more interested in the circulation and exchange of ideas and stories about nation, Empire and identity. So, thinking about an imperial *symbolic* economy is perhaps more appropriate. I want to explore the

ways in which school Readers are inevitably influenced by an imperial symbolic economy of exchange, in which imaginings of Britishness and Australianess exist and operate in relation to each other, and never entirely in isolation. In this way, I am drawing upon more recent scholarship about the British Empire that describes the Empire as constructed by networks and connections between colonies, rather than as a centre versus periphery model (Ballantyne 112). It is useful then to think about this model of circulation as both a cultural and a *structural* process, the generative matrix for literary productions of both nation and Empire.

Finally, before shifting my focus to the Readers themselves, I want to make another important point about how I deploy the terms “British” and “Britishness” in making my critique here. In agreement with Andrew Hassam, I recognise an unhistorical and simplistic assumption in the suggestion that there exists such a thing as “a natural, coherent and timeless notion of Britishness” (11). Yet, despite this acknowledgement, what underpins a Reader metanarrative of national growth is a powerful ideological investment in just such an idea. For the production of a timeless Britishness is entirely necessary to producing the deep past so valuable to an Australian national imaginary. Equally though, producing a coherent, timeless Britishness is never entirely successful. Just as in Australian imaginings, there are always aporias and spaces in which the possibilities of other readings, other voices and other perspectives appear and interject. This is precisely why the promulgation of agreed markers of Britishness is so important in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Hassam argues: “The more diverse a population, the more necessary the symbols indicating commonality may be ... Monarchs, flags and anthems were the stuff of the European nation state; and in the development of red areas on the imperial maps, they became the stuff of the British colonies as well” (Hassam 18). To Hassam’s list I would add *stories* of empire. While maps, flags, anthems and portraits of the monarch were symbols of Britishness, even more important were the stories of Britain and empire which described exactly what Britishness *meant*. Most obviously, the school Reader, an essential and ubiquitous technology of education, is a rich site for the exploration of these stories and their

effects: how Britishness is inculcated through school Readers and how such an understanding might connect with a metanarrative of national growth and broader imperial anxieties.

A “natural” mother

Invocations of the fertile English countryside represent a plentiful motherland in Alfred Austin’s “In Praise of England”, William Wordsworth’s “The Daffodils”, Alfred Tennyson’s “The Brook” and Robert Browning’s “Home Thoughts From Abroad”. These poems in particular are infused with a sense of England’s naturalness, the beauty and virtue of English womanhood and a landscape abundant and overflowing with growth. Motherhood and England become synonymous, particularly when read against the portrayals of the Australian environment, often a harsh and barren landscape. The symbolic association between nature and England works to naturalise the role of the motherland as coloniser. Where England is read as mother, it is only natural that she should spawn younger versions of herself in colonised nations and cultural identities.

“In Praise of England” is published in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade V* and *The Adelaide Readers Book V*, and is explicitly concerned with the virtues of English womanhood, her beauty, her loyalty as wife and mother, and more broadly, the morally superior society to which she gives birth. The first stanza’s praise of the incomparable English rose points toward a metaphoric concern with England as a feminine entity, but more importantly, clearly constructs England as worthy of her transcendent status.

From tangled brake and trellised bower
Bring every bud that blows,
But never will you find the flower
To match an English rose. (*The Tasmanian Readers Grade V* 14)

The rose as virtuous womanhood (a poetic commonplace) is expounded more clearly in the second stanza where the English maid is revealed as “matchless”.

Significantly, this maid neither “doubts” nor “denies”, secure in her role as a woman and a mother in the natural order of things. A beneficent England, therefore, does not fear or avoid her duty to “family” (read Empire), and as though to reassure such dominions, “She’ll cling to you as woodbine clings,/ And love you till she dies” (14). The significance of the mother/child relationship is reiterated in the poem’s third stanza. Children’s pattering feet and a “loving labour sweet” grace the English home. The home itself, site of reproduction and birth, is made sacred; it is “sanctified by prayer” (16). Importantly though, the roles of woman, mother and home are part of nature’s greater design, demonstrated as the fourth stanza shifts focus to the countryside, that fertile site of the English Romantic self.

In reading this poem as a passage in a Reader metanarrative, the codes and subcodes to which it refers inhere in contradictory, yet ultimately cohesive, thematic patterns. In one sense, the poem’s representation of a simple English rose, her rustic life and her inspired instinct for mothering, signifies a simplified, English and rurally idyllic past for an Australian imaginary. On the other hand though, these very same aspects contribute to another kind of coding, where a story of national growth must take place beyond the protective arms of the mother figure. In this way, the gentle and “delicate” English landscape and people to which the poem refers are usefully foreign to the colonial environs and its children. The organic process of growth itself, and the way this is reflected in the simultaneous and various individual narratives that occur within a story about growth, ensure that the poem’s significance as a metanarrative sign is flexible enough to accommodate multiple perspectives on Australian beginnings and an English past. In the way the poem encodes meaning, comparisons between the humble English landscape, a fecund and bountiful environment, read as superior to more striking foreign landscapes that are flawed by their extreme conditions/natures and therefore, their very otherness.

Go traverse tracts sublime or sweet,
Snow-peak or scorched ravine,
But where will you the landscape meet

To match an English scene?' (16)

As part of a Reader metanarrative, these meanings remain intact in that the English scene, lush and blessed with unrivalled growth, "The wildwood fresh with flowers,/ Garden and croft and thorp and byre/ Gleaming through silvery showers", reasserts England as the motherland (16). But, read along with almost any number of Reader narratives espousing the other-worldly beauty of the Australian scene¹, the poem suggests more than this. For students of the national imaginary, the correct answer to the question "but where will you the landscape meet to match an English scene?" is also located in any Australian school Reader, in its literary and visual illustrations of mythical bush scenes. Finally, however, in a specific reference to English exploration and colonisation, England's inviolable status as the mother country is voiced.

Across the wave, along the wind,
Flutter and plough your way,
But where will you a sceptre find
To match the English sway? (16)

England and English-ness are embodied in more than the fecund mother figure. Equally powerfully for an imagined community at home and abroad, England is also represented as a fearless warrior woman.² English superiority legitimises a British Empire that inspires both awe and fear in the wider world: "Its conscience holds the world in awe/ With blessing or with ban;/ Its freedom guards the reign of law,/ And majesty of man!" (16). Here the tone of the poem has changed dramatically. And this change highlights a central opposition/tension within codings of English maternity (as it makes meaning within a Reader metanarrative). For the mother is powerful and unforgiving just as she gives and sustains life.

This opposition is reflected in stories of the imperial-colonial relationship, a shifting construct, particularly in relation to the power invested in both the motherland as the imperial centre, and in the new colonial/national identity as central to a story of national growth. Negotiating inherited cultural memories and the legacies of an

imperial curriculum are encapsulated in one of Wordsworth's iconic invocations of the English landscape, "I wander'd lonely as a cloud". The poem is reproduced as "Daffodils" in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade IV*, *Queensland School Readers Book IV*, *Adelaide Readers Book IV* and *The Victorian Readers Sixth Book* and its repetition suggests the pervasiveness of its ideological work. In the excerpts in school Readers, A wandering poet "lonely as a cloud" inscribes a native and well-loved English countryside with a verdant fecundity that operates powerfully in connecting England with the idea of nature, and in turn, with the reproduction of parochial English values as universal and natural.³ The richness of English soil brings forth "a crowd, a host, of golden daffodils" (*Tasmanian Readers* 39). It is tempting to counter such descriptions of this England with representations of an often strikingly different Australian landscape. Indeed, Dorothea Mackellar's "My Country" appears in the same edition of *The Victorian Readers Sixth Book* and the notes that accompany "Daffodils" in the Victorian Reader direct students to think of Australian flowers that appear in Spring.⁴ Yet there is more to it than this. The poem's popularity across school Readers is significant in two key ways. In the first instance, there are the poem's interdependent terms of reference – England and its fertile soil - the embodiment of motherhood (and the concomitant sense then, of England's imperial destiny).⁵ Secondly, the poem's inclusion points to Wordsworth's immense *value* in both an immediate imperial symbolic economy and beyond, in programs of literacy and literary education in colonial contexts and newly independent nations.⁶

Similarly, Alfred Lord Tennyson's work is represented frequently in school Readers, and like Wordsworth, such a presence encodes similar sorts of idyllic, rural and quintessentially English beginnings, a kind of Romantic Imperialism. In Tennyson's "The Brook" (in the *Victorian Readers Fifth Book* and *Western Australian Reader Book IV*) the rich English countryside is finely drawn with Romantic imagery and sensibilities. In the poem, the brook's journey to the river mouth is marked by visions of plentiful growth amongst the natural spaces it passes.

With many a curve my banks I fret
By many a field and fallow
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow. (*The Victorian Readers Fifth Book* 147)

The implicit symbolism of the English landscape as site of unfettered fertility becomes more overt as the poem progresses. "I steal by lawns and grass plots,/ I slide by hazel covers;/ I move the sweet forget-me-nots/ That grow for happy lovers" (147). The poem's reference to the lovers points to England as a place of fertility, reproduction and growth. More significantly, the brook itself mirrors the movements of a young lover. Seductive and secretive, the brook steals, slips, slides and manipulates: "I make the netted sunbeam dance against my sandy shallows" (149). Here the brook captures the very essence of life, sunlight, and dances with it in a playful reference to the courting rituals of young couples. The language of the poem itself is suggestive of a lover's tryst. The brook murmurs, lingers and loiters in moonlight and wilderness. "I murmur under moon and stars/ In brambly wildernesses;/ I linger by my shingly bars;/ I loiter round my cresses" (149). The final stanza suggests a womanly fullness and assurance, "And out again I curve and flow/ To join the brimming river", and the final couplet, one that appears throughout the poem, "For men may come and men may go,/ But I go on for ever" (149) suggests the permanence of the mother country (in the natural order of things).

Robert Browning's "Home Thoughts From Abroad", included in the *Queensland School Readers Book V* and *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*, represents what is a variously aligned and contradictory project of re-presenting nationalist and imperialist sentiment. Where imperial and national values are aligned, the "home" to which Browning refers is equally the home of an Australian child, a child of Empire. The poem perhaps encapsulates an understanding of Australians as "racially British". As Hassam writes in his introduction to his study about colonial perceptions of Imperial Britain: "Their [Australians] awareness of being British but not of Britain meant that colonial Australians were and were not British. They were

the same and yet different" (6). Yet, as a metanarrative sign, "Home Thoughts From Abroad" remains a discomfiting presence. As discussed in the previous chapter, in a story of growth, the new Australian child, a figure for nation, no longer dwells on an unknown and removed motherland. Yet, Browning's poem disrupts such a coding in that a longing for England is made central and *still valid*, even from within a passage in an overarching narrative of Australianness. Despite the brash confidence of a new nation as embodied in the child figure; where the child's imagination is always and already searching for an English homeland, a national imaginary is simultaneously displaced. Or, as Browning writes: "Oh, to be in England,/ Now that April's there" (*Queensland Readers* 233).

England, exploration and empire

The imperial curriculum is an overt and ubiquitous presence in school Readers. The literary effects of the mother country, especially narratives of intrepid explorers, fateful expeditions and the connectedness of England's far-flung dominions, all point to the glory of Empire. Herein is inscribed the imperial curriculum of this chapter's title, an ideologically loaded construct that underwrites stories of self (the imperial anxiety of Dixon's critique). Along with the legends of battlefield bravery, which I will consider shortly, these texts, what might be called "Empire narratives", perform a particularly important instance of coding, or thematic patterning, in a metanarrative of national growth. Significantly though, loyalty to England and Empire is actually secondary to a more profound longing for a "home". The point I am making here is that, contrary to existing studies about the relationship between school reading material and imperialism, loyalty to the mother country is actually an ideological by-product rather than an end in itself. Returning again to the Andersonian conception of the nation as an imagined political community, "Empire narratives" are so powerful, and purposeful, precisely because they *describe* what is a logical, or rational past for a white Australian nation. In this way, the British Empire's expansive territory, its unrivalled power, and its quest for new and distant lands provide a rich back-story for Australian myths of origin and foundation. In the customary tropes of heroism, discovery and foundation, a literary invocation of

the imperial past becomes the story of a deep national past, just as it describes the spirit of a national future.

I have so far referred almost exclusively to “England” as the mother country envisioned in the school Readers. More than mere semantics, the distinction between “England” and “Britain” has an especial significance in the context of this chapter, particularly in light of Stephen Heathorn’s discussion of English national identity as constructed in English elementary school reading books from 1880 to 1914. Like the reading books employed in England, the Australian school Readers of the early twentieth century often refer to “England” before “Britain”. England and Britain are not necessarily interchangeable terms, but, as Heathorn argues, while the empire was “British”, the national and imperial heritage, especially a sense of its justice and glory, was shaped by what were perceived as specifically “English” traits (1). In this sense, a certain kind of glorious tradition “was sometimes implied by simply equating all things British with the designation ‘English’ [...] This strategy allowed for the appropriation of any British figure of cultural, intellectual or military import”(1).

“Elizabethan Seamen: Pioneers of Empire” (in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade VI* and *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*) overtly references something of the deep connection between the mother country and Australia.⁷ The invocation of the highly emotive term “pioneers”, with all its connotations of local intrepidity and endurance, frames a way of thinking about, and beyond, the nation’s immediate antecedents. Within this frame, the Elizabethan seamen are read as the noble ancestors of those who battled to settle and civilise an Australian landscape. As pioneers of Empire, the men of this essay are aligned with the greatness and glory of the imperialist mission. More specifically, the narrative focuses on the holiness of their purpose: “Life with them was no summer holiday, but a holy sacrifice offered up to duty” (*Tasmanian Readers* 164). Along with the figure of the pioneer, the notion of the duty-bound sacrifice is a guilt-framed metanarrative sign across school reading books. Sacrificial rites, both for Empire and for nation, are echoed again in

mythologies of Gallipoli. Significantly, these moments of (pioneer, Anzac) sacrifice are always intrinsic to a story of Australia's foundation and growth. The most beautiful life, this essay (and a Reader metanarrative) contends, is one marked by hardship and death: "There is another life, hard, rough, and thorny, trodden with bleeding feet and aching brow; the life of which the cross is the symbol; a battle which no peace follows this side the grave; which the grave gapes to finish before the victory is won [...] this is the highest life of man" (164-5). The work of these pioneers (and by extension, this work in the hands of their descendants), is endorsed and sanctified, where these same servants of England pass away only as God's work is done: "Their life was a long battle, either with the elements or with men; and it was enough for them to fulfil their work, and to pass away in the hour when God had nothing more to bid them do" (165). Where duty to England and God is conflated here, pioneers of Empire and nation are blessed, even as they battle "with the elements or with men" (165).⁸

Froude's essay on Elizabethan seamen makes explicit the violence implicit in British domination and colonisation of other peoples. Here then, is another instance of the instability of the metanarrative sign, which in turn disrupts the various codings to which it refers. While one type of metanarrative coding produces a beneficent mother England, she of the idyllic domestic and natural spaces as evidenced already in poems such as Austin's "In Praise of England" and Wordsworth's "Daffodils", Empire narratives inevitably undo such cultural work. The image of the motherland is menaced by imperialism and the spectre of subjugation, the subjugation of colonised indigenous environments and peoples. Mother England, therefore, cannot be read as both great and good. While such a reading is exactly the point of William Gillies' "True Greatness in Men and Nations" (in *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*), the essay opens with the central contradiction that the imperial project represents. For, indeed, how can the British Empire be great and powerful, without the use of force or violence? Gillies predicts this question at the outset: "Time was when the great man was he who could hold the greatest number of men under his heel – the man who could rob and kill his fellow-men on the greatest scale; but to-

day we are learning that the greatest man is the man who does most good to his fellow-men" (71). Quoting a passage from another Austin poem, Gillies asserts the secret of the British Empire: "We must become wise in order to become worthy of power, and we must be good if we are to be truly great" (71-2). This goodness, however, is highly contingent. It extends to fellow citizens of the Empire but not to the people of other nations with which the Empire competes: "Wars are waged in the market-place as well as on the battle-field; and, in every farm and factory and school in the British Empire, the struggle with other nations goes on without ceasing" (72). The nature of this struggle, the Empire's readiness for battle, is referenced throughout the essay. So, even as Gillies argues for good and wise leadership among the citizens of Empire, he acknowledges the blood that stains the imperial power which he so ardently defends: "Just as, in the day of battle, the guns are of little account unless there are good men behind the guns, so the whole machinery of empire is of little account unless behind it there is a great people. Armies and Navies alone cannot hold together an empire" (72). What will hold together the Empire, Gillies argues, are citizens fit for the task. Significantly, these jingoistic celebrations of British superiority are equally invoked in duties of Australian citizenship. What the Empire (and the nation) requires then, is a people fit in body, mind and spirit. More importantly though, race is here made central to the Empire narrative: "We must be fit of body, for no race of weaklings can hold an empire; we must be fit of mind, for no race of ignorant or ill-trained men can hold an empire; and we must be fit of soul, for no selfish race can hold an empire" (73). As postcolonial criticism has made clear, ideologies of imperialism are entirely intertwined with ideas about race. And in a recurrent coding of empire narratives across school Readers, Gillies portrays the British people (and, by extension, their descendants) as divinely ordained in an imperialist mission of exploration and colonisation: "We are trustees for a greater estate than has ever before been placed in the charge of man; and, if we are faithful to our trust, the British Empire may become a greater power for good in the world than we dare even to dream of to-day" (73).

Though the greatness of Empire here espoused by Gillies is frequently insisted upon across school Readers, imperial anxiety haunts an imperial curriculum, negating its power as metanarrative coding for national origins. Anxieties about holding together the Empire in turn reveal anxieties about rights to Empire (and therefore underscore settler anxieties in colonial societies such as Australia). In the following readings, I examine some examples of the Readers' imperial curriculum to explore how deeply patriotic poems and essays equally suggest deep and profound anxieties about Empire.

Imperial ideology explicitly informs the oeuvre of Rudyard Kipling. Indeed, this might be something of an understatement, given that Kipling has been variously called a bard of Empire and a singer of imperialism. It is not surprising then, that, along with excerpts from his novel *Kim*, Kipling's poem "The English Flag" appears in *The Victorian Readers Seventh Book*, *Queensland School Readers Book VI* and *The New Australian School Series Fifth Reader*.⁹ This poem, a stirring account of the glory of Empire, an unashamed celebration of conquest, and a fine example of "Kipling's thumping rhymes" was written shortly after Kipling's arrival in London from India (Eby 152). In this poem, the winds at each point of the compass declare the presence of the English flag, suggesting an unrivalled British domination of the globe. What is more interesting, however, is the way in which the poem is edited for inclusion in school Readers. In all of the school Reader publications cited above (Victoria, Queensland and NSW), the first two stanzas are entirely omitted.¹⁰ In the introduction to the abridged poem in the Queensland Reader, Kipling is described as "imperialist in doctrine" while the poem provides "an impression of the vast area of the British Empire" (69). Given this focus, it is clear that the opening stanzas are problematic. Here Kipling's Londoners are "poor little street-bred people", demonstrating his contempt for those who fail to recognise the root of their prosperity in the British dominions and in her Empire-builders. The opening stanzas also make explicit Kipling's fears about the decline of Empire. Indeed, the poem was inspired by a far less exultant English flag, a Union Jack that burned in Cork accompanied by the cheers of the Irish. As Kaori Nagai explores in her study,

Empire of Analogies: Kipling, India and Ireland, Kipling's imperial mission was for a long time menaced by the spectre of Ireland.

Anxieties about Empire are deeply embedded in the imperial curriculum of school reading books. Concerns about Irish nationalism inform Kipling's fear of an embittered and subversive threat to Empire and the severed bond between America and the motherland presents a similar kind of anxiety in other imperialist texts selected for Readers. In this way, the story of America's independence becomes something of a cautionary tale, or exemplum, about the dangers of overbearing parental control and childish folly. From within imperialist discourses as promulgated in the Reader context, however, British-American bonds can never be entirely broken. In *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*, Joseph Cook's "The British Empire", while concerned with the sheer scale of imperial territories, makes an especial reference to the continued alliance between the United States and Great Britain. In a cartographic representation of imperial power, the widespread possessions of Empire are marked on a world map accompanying the article. This mapping of British colonies, where each continent is marked by the English flag of Kipling's poem, equally refers to imperial anxieties. Seeking to stamp a British presence across the map signifies something beneath the surface that must equally be stamped out – the embittered and seditious victims of colonisation.

As in Gillies' earlier essay about true greatness in men and nations, Cook's "The British Empire" argues for the physical and political dignity of the British Empire, even as it reminds readers of the ruthless brutality with which the Empire claimed its lands and peoples. By the same token, imperial insecurities are again evident. Where Cook quotes from Daniel Webster, an American statesman, the underlying anxieties materialise in language expected to suggest the very opposite. The Empire's "morning drum-beat, following the sun or keeping company with the hours, encircles the globe with one continuous strain of the martial airs of England" (219). Where martial power is necessary for producing the agents of colonisation, loyalty to the drum-beat or the flag can only ever be understood as contingent. The

poem “The Briton’s Home”, in the same reading book, written by another American, Oliver Wendell Holmes, expresses further concern about the continued connection between the motherland and her offspring. Given the physical greatness and power of America, where the United States is metaphorically “the Western giant”, England appears inconsequential. Reassuringly for an imperial curriculum, however, a debt to England is renewed at the poem’s close, even as it is patronising: “Our little mother isle, God bless her!” (199).¹¹ Tennyson’s “Opening of the Indian and Colonial Exhibition by the Queen”, in *The Adelaide Readers Fifth Book*, also re-enacts anxieties about Empire in its lament for the independent America, now lost to British protection: “Unprophetic rulers they -/ Drove from out the mother’s nest/ That young eagle of the West/ To forage for herself alone” (248). In response to such fears, Tennyson’s final stanza is a call for unity, addressed to all who share “our glorious past” (248). This poem, written at the request of the Prince of Wales, is a celebratory one, in which rousing rhyming couplets create a sense of the drive and energy that characterises the great and magnificent British Empire. In the same way, each stanza’s repeated refrain “Britons, hold your own!”, and reference to the colonies as “sons and brothers” reiterate the unity of the Empire (247). The energetic verse, in which the produce and splendours of “every British zone” are carefully catalogued, is intended to sweep up readers in a mood of celebration and invincibility (247).

Sharers of our glorious past,
 Brothers, must we part at last?
 Shall we not through good and ill
 Cleave to one another still?
 Britain’s myriad voices call,
 “Sons, be welded each and all,
 Into one imperial whole,
 One with Britain, heart and soul!
 One life, one flag, one fleet, one Throne!”
 Britons, hold your own! (248)

Like Henry Newbolt’s “Vital Lampada”, which also appears in a number of Readers, what is so appealing about this poem, apart from the simple, joyous rhyme scheme, is the way in which it appeals to shared British sensibilities.¹² Like

Newbolt's refrain "play up and play the game", this poem's call to arms, "Britons, hold your own" is both inclusive and rousing. This call makes an assumption about a shared past, and a shared knowledge of British values and traditions, that, in turn, appeals to colonial sensibilities.

Highlighting the tropic importance of exploration and Empire in a story of national growth, Robert Falcon Scott's ill-fated 1910-13 expedition to the Antarctic is popularly reproduced in school Readers. Stories of Scott's second expedition to the Antarctic, despite its being a singular disaster, appear in *The Victorian Readers Seventh Book*, *The Tasmanian Readers Grade V* and in *The Adelaide Readers Book V*. In the Victorian Readers, "Last Leaves from Scott's Diary" transcribes Scott's diary entries for March 16 or 17, March 21, 22, 23 and 29. Alongside these entries, a facsimile copy of the last page of Scott's diary appears, where his handwriting is increasingly unsteady toward the bottom of the page. These pages inform the legends of Scott's expedition, especially what he reports as Oates' last words: "I am just going outside and may be some time" (126). This suicide Scott describes as "the act of a brave man and an English gentleman" and, indeed, Scott is similarly concerned with investing his diary entries with evidence of the indomitable English spirit, particularly when death is almost certain. Where such stories are incorporated into a Reader metanarrative, the reproduction of Scott's final writings doubly inscribe these as mythologies. Not only do we read of Scott's bravery and determination via his own literary production of the legend, but we are also provided with evidence of the legend, the appearance of the facsimile version of the last page where Scott laments: "It seems a pity, but I do not think I can write more" (127). To further reinforce the legend and its elements, following Scott's diary entries is Donald McDonald's poem "Get Ready, Inniskillings!," dedicated to Oates' heroism and essential to thematic concerns that permeate an overarching school Reader metanarrative of national growth, duty and sacrifice:

Whene'er the great word "hero"
Is commonplace and cheap;
Whene'er we tire of striving,

And sluggishly would sleep;

When, at the call of duty,
We falter on the price;
Lord, grant us such a soldier then,
And such a sacrifice. (129)

In contrast to these covert subcodes by which Scott's legend makes meaning in the Victorian Readers, in the South Australian and Tasmanian reproductions of the story, Scott's words are commented upon and contextualised. In an explicit rendering of the myth in the Adelaide and Tasmanian Readers, "Scott at the South Pole", an extract from *Scott's Last Expedition*, integrates Scott's diary entries into a more narrativised account of the expedition. Significantly, this story ends on a triumphant note, with Scott fixing the Union Jack at the South Pole, even as this triumph is somewhat vitiated by the earlier success of a Norwegian party.

To this point I have concentrated upon explorer narratives as a generic and ideological device that operates as part of an imperial curriculum in school Readers. I want to turn now to a specific instance of the explorer narrative, Australian maritime exploration as a metanarrative sign. The stories, poems and essays I will consider here refer to codings of national growth in which Australia is an unknown landscape, where the fact of "unknowing" can effectively elide Aboriginal presence and signify European discovery. Moreover, stories of British beginnings necessitate a continued relationship with the motherland, even as the nation grows into selfhood. Imperialist sensibilities inform reports of Australian maritime exploration. As Bradford rightly points out, these narratives work to produce "an Australia known only when it becomes the object of the colonial gaze" (*Reading Race* 29). In the *New Australian School Series Fifth Reader* (NSW), exploration of the long-imagined, great southern land is celebrated in "The Lifting of the Veil" and "The Founding of An Empire". "The Lifting of the Veil", subtitled "The Discovery of Australia", opens with a statement that seeks to nullify both the knowledge and presence of Aboriginal peoples: "Four hundred years ago there was no Australia, except for savages, who hunted and fought through her sombre forests" (24). It is

significant here that the nation "Australia" is conflated entirely with the presence of a human community. In a tacit acknowledgement that Australia exists only in the national imaginary, Aboriginal peoples are simultaneously excluded from the imagined community. According to ideals of the European enlightenment, the pursuit of measurable knowledge and scientific advancement, the "savages" to whom the essay refers exist only in some primitive stage of development and, as such, Aboriginal peoples are made insignificant, effectively absent. Further underscoring connections between the enlightenment, maritime exploration and imperialism as these discourses encode Australian stories of discovery, the essay's title and its opening sentences are carefully framed around antithetical metaphors of "light" and "darkness", "civilised and savage": "Mists and shadows were lifting from far-off seas and continents; new horizons and new stars were coming into view, and all the world – that is, the European world – was on tiptoe with expectation" (24). Affirming Bradford's observation that maps usually accompany explorer narratives in school texts to plot epistemologies of space and distance just as they plot the journeys of explorers, the first page of "The Lifting of the Veil" faces "an early map of Australia". The map is wildly inaccurate, where the country is therefore read as unknown, virgin territory. As Bradford has already pointed out, the country is hardly unknown: "What counts as knowledge is encoded in these maps; what does not is presented as absence, for what these maps elide is Aboriginal knowledge and knowledge systems of the land, distance and significant places" (29).

In "The Founding of An Empire", describing the 1788 British incursions at Botany Bay and Port Jackson, Aboriginal peoples, both their presence and, by extension, their knowledge systems, are more purposefully erased: "Could any of the actors in that scene return, they might search in vain for any feature by which they could recognise the Sydney Cove of a hundred years ago. The stream of fresh water, the gum forest, the timorous groups of 'Indians,' are all effaced; and in their place is a noble and populous city and a mast-thronged harbour" (56). This narrative, composed of an unnamed "gentleman's" diary entries interpolated with a third

person narrative voice, suggests something about the story's veracity and authority. Significantly too, Australia is not merely a nation but "an Empire". Lest we should miss the point, Henry Kendall's "A Day of Dream" follows "The Founding of An Empire". Kendall's sentimental portrayal of the same events, the "founding" of Australia, transforms Arthur Phillip into an Olympian figure as he stands "on that bold hill, against a broad blue stream" (57). Most profoundly, the speaker of this poem provides a more subtle evocation of the positivist terms used to differentiate between the present and the past, the civilised and the uncivilised, European presence and Aboriginal Australian absence:

Here, in a time august with prayer and praise,
Was born the nation of these splendid days,
And here, this land's majestic yesterday
Of immemorial silence died away. (57)

Here the land's silence, silent because it is unknown, is replaced with the civilised and blessed voices of prayer and praise. The past, and the unknowing that is an "immemorial silence" asserts Aboriginal knowledge as un-knowledge. Moreover, despite the majesty of this yesterday, the past (and here Aboriginal peoples are strongly implicated as embodying both the past and indeed, its majesty) is made irrevocably absent, having "died away" (57).¹³ Yet, in a contradiction that seemingly reasserts Aboriginal presence, despite the poem opening with Arthur Phillip and the "day of dream", it closes with a reminder of the land and its original inhabitants. Even as "A Day of Dream" attempts to elide an Aboriginal presence, the poem excavates that presence by the very acknowledgement of a disappearance.

At the same time though, other Australian exploration narratives reconfigure the absence of indigenous peoples, signified by those empty spaces on the map and, indeed, the task of mapping itself. "The Tom Thumb" in *The New Australian School Series Third Reader* and John Bernard O'Hara's poem "Flinders", published in *The Victorian Readers Fifth Book*, encode an unexplored, unknown landscape (even if it is not truly empty). "The Tom Thumb" subscribes to a "European hierarchy of space" where land is known only once mapped, and where the black man's gaze, his store

of knowledge, is contradictorily recognised and devalued (Bradford, *Postcolonial book*). In framing a narrative of exploration as it refers to metanarrative codes in school Readers, the story begins by introducing its explorer heroes, as well as positioning them in relation to the “great unknown” (44). This passage draws on a highly evocative and sexualised coding in which the wonder and mystery contained within the landscape, here presented as a concern with the interior, is ultimately conquered by the white man as he traverses it, making his mark both on the land’s Aboriginal peoples and in his cartographic traces. I include the following excerpt from the narrative’s opening passages to draw attention to the discourses of whiteness and masculinity inherent to the explorer narrative, particularly as these refer to a Reader metanarrative:

In those days very little was known about the coast of Australia and nothing at all about the interior. It was a great unknown land. No one knew what wonders or what mysteries it might contain. There were rivers on which no white man had ever rowed, harbours in which no ship had ever anchored, and mountains from which no human beings but black men had ever gazed. (44)

In this story, Flinders and Bass undertake a suitably “perilous” voyage to explore the unknown Australian coast, its bays and river mouths, in the small boat, the appropriately named “Tom Thumb” (44). What is so striking about the narrative is its focus on the interactions between Flinders, Bass and local indigenous peoples. The story reveals a deep ambivalence about Aboriginal presence and knowledge. For instance, when a breaker drowns their provisions and powder, Flinders and Bass rely on Aboriginal people to tell them “of a river where they could get plenty of fresh water and wild ducks” (45). Yet, upon travelling the river, which turns out to be “only a creek”, indigenous knowledge is simultaneously undermined. When “numbers of strange blacks” appear, and the “travellers” begin to fear an attack, Flinders and Bass are so bold so as to land among these people. What happens next is simply omitted. Yet, given that the next paragraph sees Bass spreading powder to dry and Flinders “amus[ing] himself by clipping the hair and beards of the savages”, it appears that, despite the earlier implication, there is little threat of an

attack (46). More disturbing than these politics of representation, however, is the significance of the hair-cutting episode itself. In this act of barberism, Flinders enacts a version of the kind of “civilising mission” useful in justifications of imperial/colonial agendas. Yet, importantly too, just as the landscape itself is marked and mapped during exploration, Flinders marks its peoples. In physically marking his passage through the Australian interior on the Aboriginal “savages”, Flinders equally acknowledges these peoples as intimately connected with the landscape, and by extension, as the land’s rightful custodians.

In O’Hara’s poem, Flinders’ courage in undertaking a wild and fearful journey into the unknown, the “stress of alien seas”, reiterates and makes normative a particular kind of European knowledge of the world (6).¹⁴ Furthermore, underpinning Flinders’ heroism is a familiar notion of duty to the motherland: “For England’s sake, he sought/ Fresh fields of fame, and fought/ A stormy world for these’ (6). Notably I think, this poem refers only obliquely to fighting a stormy world, rather than to any direct contact with indigenous peoples. In the fourth and penultimate stanza, as well as playing out the England-Australia umbilical cord, O’Hara’s poem is marked by its resonances with Kendall’s “A Day of Dream”:

Perchance he saw in dreams,
Beside our sunlit streams,
In some majestic hour,
Old England’s banners blow;
Mayhap the radiant morn
Of this great nation born,
August with perfect power,
A hundred years ago. (8)

Like Governor Phillip, who, when the mists of morning clear, is witness to “Heaven flowered on a bay of gold”, the explorer Flinders is bathed in the light of a radiant morn (57). Both men are inspired by visions of “Old England’s banner” and while Phillip himself appears “on a day of dream”, Flinders’ perceptions of such a future appear during his dreams (57).¹⁵

Matthew Flinders is also referenced in the Tasmanian Readers in an illustration accompanying an excerpt from Sir Henry Newbolt's preface to *The Book of the Long Trail*. Titled "Unlimited War" in the Sixth Grade Reader, this essay, which also appears in *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*, specifically draws attention to explorer narratives as mythologies. These stories of exploration, Newbolt argues, are even more impressive than those of war (although, notably, Newbolt himself wrote many poems about the glories of English naval and military history).¹⁶ Newbolt goes on to isolate those aspects that characterise a "good" war story: "First, the contest, the struggle against odds and obstacles; second, the moments of special daring or success; and, third and best of all, the men who were the heroes of those struggles and great moments" (*Tasmanian Reader* 121). These narratological elements are central to the heroic quest narrative as circulated among story-telling traditions for centuries. Highlighting these quest elements in stories of both war and exploration has implications for school Reader ideologies. As well as reiterating the centrality of sacrifice to mythologies of nation, Newbolt points to the constructedness of such stories, their formulaic nature, and the purpose they serve in connecting an imagined community: "The right stuff is there, the stuff that we all want and can never do without" (121). More significantly though, in making explicit the connection between war stories and stories of exploration, Newbolt suggests that the wastefulness and cruelty of war is equally present in British exploration. And even as he absolves his adventuring heroes of any desire to kill, he implies its inevitability in the military metaphor and his acknowledgement of exploration as more properly "invasion":

Every one of them was, in truth, an army commander, though the army was only a handful of men and was never out to kill. What territories they invaded, these explorers; what campaigns they made; what forced marches; what flanking movements; how they managed their transport and commissariat; what risks they took; what casualties they suffered; how they supported each other; and, when disaster came, what lonely and undefeated deaths they died! (122)

Quotations from Banks's journal in "The Endeavour on Barrier Reef" (*The Tasmanian Readers Grade VI*), an excerpt from G. Arnold Wood's *Voyage of the Endeavour*, equally

acknowledge something of the European invasion.¹⁷ Particularly revealing of a complicated and ambivalent relationship with the Australian landscape as it is represented interchangeably with its first peoples, Banks writes: “A better fate [drowning], may be, than those would have who should get ashore without arms to defend themselves from the Indians [...] in a country where we had not the least reason to hope for subsistence, so barren had we always found it” (4).

British bravery on the battlefield

Stories of British battlefield bravery further support an imperial curriculum in illustrating a glorious British past. Those men who prove themselves during wartime are the best of British stock and thus, they are claimed as tenacious, loyal and honourable Englishmen. What is particularly striking about the literary construction of these courageous guardians of England and Empire is a sense of their relationship to Australian cultural identity. It is significant that texts about England’s wartime exploits and disasters as published in the Readers span a period of that nation’s history, from the Elizabethan era to the First World War. Australia, as a nation reliant upon England for a sense of its own heritage, is equally concerned with claiming, or at least acknowledging, the great English war heroes and battles of such a long and illustrious past. As well as providing a noble heritage and backdrop to an Australian story, as stock figures of the Empire, these heroes can be read as the forebears of those men etched into an Australian cultural consciousness in the literary production of World War I, most notably stories about the “Diggers” at Gallipoli. The popular notion that an Australian rite of passage occurs in the trenches of the First World War reinforces the significance of battle in marking national development. As Anderson argues, the idea of nation offers “a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning” (11). While Anderson is writing here more specifically about the way in which the idea of nation, or the national imaginary, functions almost as a religious or spiritual trope, this same argument underscores why Gallipoli is so effectively intertwined in the national imaginary, and indeed, in a Reader metanarrative. Like the idea of nation itself, about which Gallipoli is, anyway, a referent, this battleground equally

provides the means for a secular transformation of fatality and contingency into continuity and meaning. For any further evidence of this secular spirituality in outpourings of nationalism we need only look to the phenomenon of pilgrimage that draws countless young Australians to Turkey, especially for Anzac Day.

It may be possible then to argue another literary effect of the relation to mother country, a cultural inheritance that honours men at war irrespective of whether they emerge victorious. More important is the cause under which they fight and the indomitable way in which they fight. Often, myths are the product of tragic defeat (or more precisely, the deaths of wartime leaders). England's great military leaders are not only loyal to the motherland, but also to their charges. "Sir Richard Grenville's last fight" and "The Revenge" are published alongside each other in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade V* and both narratives are concerned with Grenville's heroic death as the epitome of English honour.¹⁸ An example of a severely outnumbered, embattled leader who remains steadfast to his cause, it is not surprising that Grenville's story is considered worthy enough to warrant two accounts of his last fight. Equally significant is the issue of imperial power at stake here. Grenville's campaign stands in for Elizabethan England in its challenge to the great military might and imperial power of Spain (Hammer 1-2). The story mythologised in the Readers occurs during the Anglo-Spanish war, when a superior Spanish force surprises an exhausted and outnumbered fleet of English ships. It is written by Sir Walter Raleigh, Professor of English at Oxford University. Honourable and courageous, Sir Richard Grenville first rescues men ashore before facing his foes: "Sir Richard utterly refused to turn from the enemy, saying that he would rather choose to die than to dishonour himself, his country and ship" (75). The ensuing battle is represented in all its glorious disaster. The following morning, the ship's gunpowder is finished and forty of her men are slain. The desperate state of the single English ship is contrasted with the advantages enjoyed by the Spanish forces (76). Grenville, however, continues to fight. He orders the master gunner to split and sink the ship so that there will be no glory for the Spanish in their victory. While lesser men plead for their lives, Grenville and the gunner refuse to submit. At

the conclusion of the narrative Grenville is dead. Yet his greatness is so profound that his death “was by the enemy greatly bewailed” (79). The cultural significance of the noble sacrifice, the honourable, transformative experience of Anderson’s national imaginary, is made clear by the narrator at the story’s close: “What became of his body, whether it were buried in the sea or on the land, we know not; but the comfort that remaineth to his friends is that, being dead, he hath not outlived his own honour” (79). Not surprisingly, Paul Hammer dismisses Sir Walter Raleigh’s retelling of Grenville’s last fight as a “propaganda image” in his history of the Elizabethan Wars (165). For evidence of the story’s function as propaganda, it is important to note Raleigh’s archaising language, particularly as it appears in the closing passage of the narrative, as cited above.

Tennyson’s “The Revenge” equally evokes a sense of Grenville’s honour and heroism, again implying that, in a military campaign, raw English courage is worth more than superior numbers or firepower.¹⁹ The poem, subtitled “A ballad of the fleet”, offers an even more romanticised portrayal of Grenville. Much more is made of Grenville’s decision to save those ashore, for example: “But I’ve ninety men and more that are lying sick ashore./ I should count myself the coward if I left them [...] To these Inquisition dogs and the devildoms of Spain” (80). As Lord Howard leaves with five warships, Sir Richard single-handedly takes responsibility for the sick and brings them aboard. Their gratitude emphasises his goodness, usefully contrasted with the depraved cruelty and barbarism of the Spanish: “And they blest him in their pain, that they were not left to Spain” (80). The battle itself, “the fight of the one and the fifty-three” evokes the same jingoistic fervour of Raleigh’s tract: The Spanish send in ship after ship and the war rages through the night. By morning, the gunpowder is spent and forty of the hundred Englishmen are dead “and half the rest of us maimed for life”. Sir Richard, however, echoing the sentiments of “play up and play the game” and “hands all round”, rallies his men: ‘But Sir Richard cried in his English pride:/ We have fought such a fight for a day and a night/ As may never be fought again!/ We have won great glory my men!’ (84). Finally, when Sir Richard is caught, he pays no heed to Spanish praise. Instead, his depiction as

valiant English hero is particularly located in relation to his duty to the holy trinity of an imperial curriculum: Queen, Faith and Duty.

The poem closes with a familiar metanarrative sign, the conflation of the motherland and nature herself. Grieving at the death of a favoured son, a violent storm ensues: "And the water began to heave and the weather to moan ... And a wave like the wave that is raised by an earthquake grew,/Till it smote on their hulls and their sails and their masts and their flags,/And the whole sea plunged and fell on the shot-shattered navy of Spain" (85). The wild fury directed at the Spanish fleet further reinforces notions of the "unnatural" devil-like Spaniards and their inferiority to a blessed England.

From the Elizabethan wars to the period immediately preceding the Napoleonic wars, another of England's great battles is immortalised in Thomas Campbell's poem "The Battle of the Baltic" in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade V* and in the *Adelaide Readers Book V*.²⁰ Unlike the tragic death of Sir Richard Grenville, however, this poem celebrates Lord Nelson's uncompromising triumph over the "might of Denmark's crown", and the glory of English victory (*Tasmanian Readers* 34).²¹ The Danish ships, likened to sea monsters, represent a formidable force. England, however, is bold and fearless in its flushed anticipation of battle, courage borne in the captains' cries of "Hearts of oak!" (36). Only real fortitude, the type already embodied in the literary production of Sir Richard Grenville, can ensure victory, as the guns "spread a death-shade round the ships,/ Like the hurricane eclipse/ Of the sun!" (36).

The intensity of the poem, both its metre and auditory effect, reflect the dramatic battle itself: "Again! again! again!/ And the havoc did not slack,/ Till a feeble cheer the Dane/ To our cheering sent us back" (36). In particular, the repetition of the word "again", especially the regular and prominent beat or accent this creates, in turn enacts the continuous, battering havoc suggested in the following line. The weariness and constancy of battle is picked up again in the following couplet where

feeble Danish cheers answer those of the victorious British fleet. At this point though, the pace slows. A more measured, slower tempo is necessary to underscore the honour of England and her military sons, but more importantly, to savour the enemy's surrender to England's King.

Out spoke the Victor then,
As he hailed them o'er the wave:
Ye are brothers! Ye are men!
And we conquer but to save!
So peace, instead of death, let us bring: -
But yield, proud foe, thy fleet,
With the crews, at England's feet,
And make submission meet
To our King. (36-7)

This poem's exultant rendering of English and imperial glory gathers together a number of important threads in the narrative of Australian growth. As well as providing a sense of a rich and deep past, this poem is yet another expression of the literary institution of male heroism in the service of one's country, an institution that is so usefully co-opted in national imaginaries. While these particular heroic figures and touchstone events inhere most powerfully in constructions of English national identity, they nevertheless provide the bones of a tradition that can be adapted to local conditions. Like Grenville, Nelson as referent for the greatness of the British race, contributes to what might be more broadly termed the "imperial imaginary". "The Death of Nelson", written by the historian Robert Southey, appears in the same fifth-grade Tasmanian Reader that contains "The Battle of the Baltic", thereby reinforcing Nelson's important status in English naval history.²² This story offers another narrative of English victory which unfolds against the backdrop of the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815). The battle of Trafalgar, in which Nelson died, was a significant moment in British history. Not only did the destruction of Villeneuve's fleet effectively end Napoleon's plan for an invasion of England, the battle also ensured that Britain would remain the greatest naval power in the world for another 100 years (Gates 46). For a story of British growth and expansion then, the character of Nelson plays a valuable part. In her study of reading books employed in the

South Australian education system, Maureen Nimon reaches a similar conclusion: "The military or naval man was a sound choice as hero because he could be seen to be engaged in trying to preserve or extend British power [...] Active service was one way in which a man could make a direct contribution to British power. If he died in action, then his devotion to Britain was beyond question" (232). And in his study of the same texts in English schools, Stephen Heathorn writes of Nelson's "immense symbolic stature": "In reading books he was represented as all that was worthy in an Englishman [...] eventually sacrificing his life for his nation in its time of need" (51). Echoes of this jingoistic patriotism still reverberate across school Readers in stories of Australian sacrifice during the First World War.

Thus, reflecting Nelson's cultural value in stories of race, England and Empire, "The Death of Nelson" is less concerned with the battle itself than with an intimate portrayal of Nelson's tragic and heroic death, a kind of eulogium. Just as Tennyson's "The Revenge" seeks to sanctify a particular kind of Englishman, this account of Nelson's last fight contrasts one of England's dutiful sons with her dishonourable enemies. When Nelson gives orders to cease firing upon an enemy ship, "supposing that she had struck", he is demonstrably a man of principle, one who complies with the unwritten "rules" of battle (110). His unworthy opponents, however, have no such code of honour: "From this ship, which he had thus twice spared, he received his death" (110). Yet, most powerfully, Nelson carries on despite his mortal wound. At this point "The Death of Nelson" feeds back into another key metanarrative coding: the transcendental leader upon whom a nation, and an Empire, can rely. Where institutionalised school reading books can be read as addressing future generations of Australians, leadership, as explored in the previous chapter, becomes a central metanarrative sign. In the thematic patterns (or codings) of leadership, morality is secularised and nationalism is transformative in its spiritual fervour. Indeed, in 1897, Edmund Dowden perceptively notes: "History as written by Southey is narrative rendered spiritual by moral ardour" (qtd in Nimon 232). It seems a fair assessment. As Nimon herself argues, "In Southey's pages, Nelson became an agent of national destiny" (232). Transplanted to school

Readers, Southey's tribute is transcendental: "Yet even now, not for a moment losing his presence of mind, [Nelson] observed [...] that the tiller ropes [...] were not yet replaced, and ordered that new ones should be rove immediately" (111). The romantic portrayal of Nelson intensifies as he tells the surgeon to leave him and instead care for those whom he might still save. An officer and a gentleman, Nelson is committed to the men under his command. Equally, he is committed to the good fight. Despite the pain, "at every hurrah a visible expression of joy gleamed in the eyes and marked the countenance of the dying hero" (112). Nelson's iconic role in serving England and Empire is pre-empted in those words attributed to him moments before death: "Thank God, I have done my duty" (114).

This kind of duty, an absolute devotion to a national and imperial ideal, equally informs the model of citizenship promulgated in school Readers. Sir John Moore, another model of service to one's country and another key character in the story of England and Empire, is eulogised in Charles Wolfe's "The Burial of Sir John Moore at Corunna", published in *The Victorian Readers Fifth Book*.²³ Similarly to Southey's narrative, this poem mourns the passing of a great leader in the hour of success. And set during the Peninsular War, this poem marks yet another significant moment in English military history: Sir John Moore's expedition interrupts Napoleon's conquest of the Peninsula, effectively ensuring England's continued hold on Portugal (Gates 175-9). The cult of the hero is established from the beginning of the poem:

Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
As his corpse to the rampart we hurried;
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
O'er the grave where our hero we buried. (124)

Grief for a dead warrior buried on the battlefield is expressed in the melancholy of the opening lines where this speaker laments what is painfully absent; the drum, a farewell shot; *our* hero. Unlike the reaffirming mood of triumph underlying the earlier narratives of British military and moral superiority (even in defeat), this poem is wistful. The contemplative mood of the poem is enhanced by the image of

soldiers burying their hero “by the struggling moonbeam’s misty light” (124). Moore is, however, buried in a manner befitting a war hero: “No useless coffin enclosed his breast,/ Not in sheet or in shroud we wound him;/ But he lay like a warrior taking his rest/ With his martial cloak around him” (124). His fellow Britons, stoic and loyal soldiers, do not speak their sorrow. Instead, they are represented as equal to their hero’s greatness in their acceptance of loss and grief: “But we steadfastly gazed on the face that was dead,/ And we bitterly thought of the morrow” (124). The general notes to the poem contextualise Moore’s heroic act. In this way, the notes act as a particular kind of paratext, a zone of “*transaction*” that informs “a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it” (Genette 2). Here the student learns that “Napoleon was marching to crush [Moore] at the head of 70,000 men” (207). Seriously outnumbered, Moore has a force of only 25,000 men, and thus, his legend is born: “He was consequently forced to retreat from Astorga to Corunna, a distance of nearly 250 miles, over mountains, through rain and snow, and harassed by the enemy” (207). The notes emphasise the extremity of the situation, a David and Goliath mismatch between the combatants amid a hostile natural environment. This representation appeals to a popular white Australian imagining of its heroes, whereby proving oneself a man required both sacrifice and courage. Moore is cast in the role of the tenacious “underdog” or “battler” – a mythological mainstay of popular Australian discourses of identity, particularly as applied in the sporting and political arenas. Against all odds then, Moore does something extraordinary, he fights back: “He fought a rearguard action to cover the embarkation, and was killed in the moment of victory” (207). The Australian cultural desire to reinscribe death, waste and defeat as something glorious in its heroes, and again the Gallipoli myth is markedly relevant here, is revealed most potently in the writing exercise suggested for students at the end of the notes: “Write an essay on the theme, ‘Battles are Won by the Men that Fall’” (207).

“The Story of General Gordon” in *The Victorian Readers Fourth Book*, another heavily symbolic narrative of heroism and sacrifice, has rather more concrete connections to Australia’s colonial history.²⁴ Gordon’s death is the catalyst for an historic occasion,

the first time that soldiers of a self-governing Australian colony, New South Wales, depart to fight in an imperial war. Therefore, for an embedded imperial curriculum in a Reader metanarrative, the story of Gordon recalls the NSW Contingent to the Sudan. In turn, this highlights the duality of Australian colonial identities where a commitment to a local imaginary is formed in relation to Empire and England.²⁵ Gordon is another iconic British military figure in the mould of Nelson and Grenville. In his critique of an English national identity inscribed by school Readers, Heathorn agrees: "Perhaps the epitome of the English military imperial-patriot was General 'Chinese' Gordon [...] Not only had his been the ultimate sacrifice for his nation, his example also demonstrated the prime dictum of good citizenship and patriotism" (50-1). Gordon's story makes numerous references to metanarrative codings that signify him as both an English son, and a man of Empire. For example, the narrator relates an anecdote of Gordon coming under fire during the Crimean War. Following an examination of his cap that reveals a bullet hole, Gordon remarks, "Those Russians are good shots [...] They are better than the French", before replacing his cap (111). Concerned as I am with metanarrative signs and codings, it is this anecdote that encodes Gordon as recognisably heroic. His apparent lack of fear of dying, displayed in the laconic humour that often characterises imaginings of Australia's own military histories, marks Gordon out as a man apart. His fearlessness suggests the moral certainty within which he operates as an agent of imperial destiny. As a leader, Gordon inspires those who follow him: "As he was a strong, just man, who tried to do what was right, his troops soon learned to love him and to have faith in him. They were ready to follow him anywhere without fear" (111).

The connection is clear: where Gordon's troops recognise that they can follow him without fear, he is destined to do what is right. Lest we should misunderstand, however, the narrator labours the point. Again foregrounding the rightfulness of Gordon's imperial mission, an unusual temporal and spatial shift occurs in the narrative. Here the narrator meditates on Gordon's charity to homeless boys whom he houses and teaches. Accentuating the significance of these passages is a sense of

how Gordon's paternalism might be more profitably read as a not-so-subtle representation of just and clearly defensible imperialist ideology. A paternal and loving figure, Gordon finds work for the boys, many as sailors, and father-like, watches over them: "He used to mark the course of their vessels with pins, or little flags, on his map" (112). Gordon refers to these boys as "my kings". Alongside tales of Gordon's victories at war, the figure of Gordon himself carries a wider implication of a glorious and benevolent imperial power, the British Empire.²⁶ Having predisposed the ideal reader to a particular interpretation of events, the narrative again shifts its focus to a country "south of Egypt, where the people were always fighting", and where, importantly, Gordon governs "well and wisely" (112-13). The shift in location marks a shift in discursive form too. Here an imperial curriculum is barely contained; the narrative normalises Gordon's role as ruler in a foreign nation, the implication being that the local population is not civilised enough to govern themselves. These people are, after all, "always fighting". The narrative reinforces imperial ideologies drawn out from a simple binary of civilisation and barbarity: "A fierce chief rose up, and tried to make himself king" (113). The chief, with all that the term connotes of primitive, tribal peoples, is inevitably "fierce" (read brutal, barbaric). More significantly though, this man can only "try" to make himself king, and in such ideologically-loaded language, the narrative effectively revokes his legitimate claim to his native land and its leadership.

The central opposition between a civilised man and a barbarous native sets the scene for a heroic, tragic end. When reinforcements finally reach the embattled Gordon, who refuses to leave his soldiers, he is already dead at rebel hands. The significance of this story in Australian literary imaginings is taken up by Roslyn Russell: "In February 1885 the news reached Australia [...] that a hero of the British Empire, General Charles Gordon, had been slain [...] This incident inspired the formation of the first of the 'expeditionary forces' that Australia would send to Britain's war [...] British and Australian writers began to talk about Australians and war, and the theme has persisted in the literature of both countries ever since" (52).

For Dixon, however, Gordon's death signifies much more than the beginnings of a literature about Australia and war. Rather, it was this event that made literary imaginings of Empire and the glory of imperialism necessary: "More than any other events before the Boer War, the invasion of Egypt in 1882 and the death of Gordon at Khartoum in 1885 fuelled British anxieties" (3). Reading the narrative in this light draws attention to its symptomatic function, where Gordon's death is perceived as evidence of the Empire's possible disintegration.

Finally, I want to turn to a war story of enduring mythological proportions, a narrative that encapsulates, I think, the deeply interwoven stories of English and Australian nationalisms, especially within a school Reader metanarrative. "Simpson and his Donkey", published in *The Victorian Readers Fourth Book*, is an iconic story of the First World War, appropriated in the national imaginary as emblematic of a fiercely loyal and courageous Australian war effort. In this particular retelling of the legend, Simpson is claimed for Empire, and, simultaneously, for Australia. In this sense, we can more clearly adduce the complicated identity exchange that occurs as Simpson is described as "a British soldier" just as he is identified as "among the first of *our* brave fellows to land at Anzac" [my emphasis] (106). "Simpson and his Donkey", a particularly significant instance of the nationalist encoding of "Anzac", is an excellent example of how such codings are deeply indebted to British mythologies of heroism and, indeed, Britishness. Simpson's depiction clearly owes much to an English tradition of stoic endurance and selflessness, the kind instituted in stories and poems of Grenville, Nelson, Wellington and Gordon: "Wherever the bullets rained the thickest, there Simpson was to be found bandaging the wounded or holding a refreshing flask of water to the parched lips of some dying soldier" (106). Yet, despite this British heritage, Simpson is equally claimed for Australian soldiers, and, by extension, for an Australian legend: Simpson and his donkey "[are] known to every Australian on the Peninsula" (106). And Simpson's death is claimed by an Australian literary tradition as his faithful donkey stands watch over his still form. The devoted stockhorse or cattle dog either dying with its master, or maintaining guard over the dead body, encodes the harsh Australian environment

(along with the ultimate sign for loyalty). Significantly, these same codings animate an Anzac myth; the extreme demands of the battlefield, and mateship. The closing of this narrative is perhaps most clearly suggestive of the duality inherent in Simpson's legend: "*Thus died one of England's noblest sons, and deeply did the Anzacs mourn for him.* Though his voice is now silent, he has left us an example that will never die, and the story of Simpson and his donkey will long be remembered among the bravest deeds of Anzac" [my emphases] (109). Further evidence of Simpson's cultural currency is the prevalence of his continuing role in selective Australian memories of war. There are statues of Simpson and his donkey at both the Australian War Memorial in Canberra and at The Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne.

King Shakespeare: Shakespeare as measure of cultural maturation

I have so far explored several metanarrative instances of an ancestral Britishness, upon which an Australian imaginary draws and therefore transforms. These metanarrative instances perform an English heritage as divine providence, and England's imperial power is enacted in the exploratory expeditions and great battles of the past. Of course, the cultural identifier "Britishness" is equally located in cultural sensibilities. And where a Reader metanarrative is concerned with other measures of national maturation, the proper appreciation of Shakespeare is invoked as a model of taste and accomplishment. In school Readers, Shakespeare is an "heroically imperial", Carlylean (masculinist and patriarchal) institution (Mead 28). Unsurprisingly then, "King Shakespeare", an excerpt from Carlyle's renowned essay "The Hero as a Poet" appears in *Queensland Readers Book VI* and *The Tasmanian Readers Grade VI*. To appreciate the institutionalisation of Shakespeare, it is necessary to look further than a discursive strategy of imperial centrality versus colonial marginality. While school Readers do position Shakespeare as central to culture, the Shakespearisation of an emergent national identity in school Readers does not mean something so simple as a straightforward colonial desire to emulate Britishness via cultural and literary traditions. Rather, as Philip Mead argues in his essay "Reversible Empires," Shakespeare as institution is caught up in questions of

origin. In a school Reader metanarrative, where origin is a pervasive and ubiquitous problem, Shakespeare as a cultural “founding father” is especially relevant. It is not Shakespeare’s text that is important, but rather, Shakespeare as “sign”. Philip Mead more lucidly argues for Shakespeare’s centrality to Australian anxieties about origin:

What is at work is always a *rhetoric* of origins which stems from the critical and cultural *desire for* (unitary) origins in the face of their absence. To read the many traces of “Shakespeare” in Australian national culture exposes some of the assumptions about that culture’s history, and particularly the rhetoric of “origins” and “emergence” that shapes the tropic surface of its history and that provides so much of its genetic material. (30)

Thus, the idea of Shakespeare as King, as effected in Carlyle’s notable tract, is especially fitting, not simply in terms of an embedded imperial curriculum, but more importantly, in terms of Shakespeare’s power as an origin, as a commodity in the formation of national culture. Moreover, in school Readers, the emergence of Shakespeare as King, as literary and cultural institution, can be productively read as a “complexly articulated and historically overdetermined” metanarrative sign (Mead 31). In other words, in the various school Reading series under consideration here, Shakespearean signs are not merely products of an antipodean inferiority complex. More usefully, Shakespeare encodes a manifestation of settler anxieties about foundation: what might be termed Shakespeare’s “Australianisation”. As Carlyle instructs: “In spite of the sad state hero-worship now lies in, consider what this Shakespeare has actually become among us” (*Tasmanian Reader* 181). In Carlyle’s imperial Shakespeare, the figure of Shakespeare is the commodified object of Mead’s essay: “He is the grandest thing we have yet done” (182).

For Carlyle, Shakespeare as object is usefully conflated with England and Empire. Shakespeare *is* the imperial imaginary: “England before long, this island of ours, will hold but a small fraction of the English: in America, in New Holland, east and west to the very antipodes, there will be a Saxondom covering great spaces of the globe. And now, what is it that can keep all these together into virtually one

nation?" (182). Significantly for my reading of metanarrative signs in school Readers, particularly in relation to the institutionalisation of Shakespeare, Carlyle is entirely aware of his encoding of Shakespeare as imperial referent, "as the noblest, gentlest, yet strongest of rallying-signs, indestructible" (182). For a deconstructive reading of a national story, however, Shakespeare as founding father of a literary relationship between all the people of Empire is most revealing in its connotations of Shakespeare's originariness: "From Parramatta, from New York, wheresoever, under what sort of parish-constable soever, English men and women are, they will say to one another: 'Yes, this Shakespeare is ours; we produced him, we speak and think by him; we are one of blood and kind with him'" (183).

Where Shakespeare is manifested as originary sign, his words are equally imbued with foundational effects. "In Praise of England", an extract from *King Richard II*, is reproduced in the *New Australian School Series Fifth Reader* and in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade VI*. As envisioned by Carlyle, "In Praise of England" produces a version of Shakespeare that enacts a deep and profound love of the motherland. In this verse, Shakespeare's England is "this other Eden, demi-paradise", and by virtue of this literary production, Shakespeare himself, as born of Eden, is reinscribed a divine presence, the founding father of English, the language of Empire (*Tasmanian Readers* 148). Shakespeare's foundational status is echoed across school Readers in later literary manifestations of England's other-worldliness, as evidenced in those poems I considered earlier by Wordsworth, Austin and Tennyson. Furthermore, Wordsworth, himself a key figure in the formation of English studies, specifically positions Shakespeare as an exchangeable object, one who stands in for the mother tongue, and, by extension, for England. In Wordsworth's "British Freedom", in *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*, Shakespeare's centrality is reinscribed: "We must be free or die who speak the tongue/ That Shakespeare spake" (80). Harold Begbie's "Britons Beyond the Seas" in *The Victorian Readers Seventh Book* and in *Queensland School Readers Book VI* produces a similar effect. Herein, Shakespeare is invoked as the pre-eminent cultural authority: the speaker of the poem calls upon "Shakespeare's tongue for our counsels" (53). Thus, what is important here is not

Shakespeare's work, but rather the importance attributed to Shakespeare's English language, his function as a metanarrative sign. His words become irrelevant, taken out of context as they are, and what becomes crucial is simply the *presence* of Shakespeare. Demonstrating this, the Shakespearean textual presence in school Readers is produced almost exclusively by extracts from longer works. For example, "The Fall of Wolsey", from *Henry the Eighth* and "Antony's Address" from *Julius Caesar* both appear in *The New Australian School Series Fifth Reader*, while in the *Queensland School Readers Book VI*, "Antony's Speech Over Caesar's Body", *Julius Caesar*, "Hamlet's Soliloquy", *Hamlet*, and "The Seven Ages of Man", *As You Like It*, are all included. In the *Queensland School Readers Book V*, there is "Consolation Under Banishment", from *As You Like It*, and "Henry V Before Agincourt". "The Morning of the Battle of Agincourt", from *Henry V* appears in *The Adelaide Readers Book V* and "A Most Lamentable Comedy", an adapted excerpt from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is included in *The Victorian Readers Seventh Book*. I do not include this roll-call of Shakespearean texts as a complete inventory of all Shakespeare's work represented in school Readers, for there are other excerpts not included above. Rather, I include the list to illustrate my point that Shakespeare operates multifariously here as a metanarrative sign. Clearly, the point is not really a proper "appreciation" of Shakespeare's literary achievements, but instead, an appreciation of what Shakespeare, and his work, stand for, both within an imperial curriculum, and within an Australian story of origins and growth.

As further evidence of my argument, "The Genius of Shakespeare", a monument to what I might call the Shakespeare institution (the man and his legacy), is included in *The New Australian School Series Fifth Reader* of New South Wales. Shakespeare is explicitly man-made-icon in this short essay, where a focus on Shakespeare's "genius" constructs him as other-worldly, omniscient: "He turned the globe around for his amusement, and surveyed the generations of men, and the individuals, as they passed, with their different concerns, passions, follies, vices, virtues, actions, and motives – as well those that they knew as those which they did not know or acknowledge to themselves" (298). Here Shakespeare is literally the creator, where

spirits await his call and come “at his bidding”, and the world of real men and women lies open to him (298). It is particularly important to note that, in this essay, the genius of Shakespeare is his knowledge of, and his ability to narrate, universal truths. For, if Shakespeare and his works embody the universal values, beliefs and truths of all humankind, it follows that Britishness, of which Shakespeare is such a powerful signifier, is equally a universal value or truth to which all humankind aspires. In textual productions such as this one, the manufacturing process responsible for making “Shakespeare” is self-evident. Simultaneously, this same manufacturing process is implicated in the cultural presuppositions of an imperial curriculum. The author of this essay, William Hazlitt, writes: “No man of whom we have any knowledge in literature ever had, like Shakespeare, the faculty of pouring out on all occasions such a flood of the richest and deepest language; no other man ever said such splendid things on all subjects universally. He was the greatest master of expression that literature has known” (298). English, the language of such richness and depth, the language with which Shakespeare so beautifully expresses his genius, is therefore absolutely essential to the imperial economy. Hawkes takes the metaphor to its logical conclusion: “English ... will become the gold standard, the sterling mark of civilisation, the currency of sense, the mint of history, the hallmark of that which sets Prospero above Caliban, the common coin, in short, of genuine manhood” (66). Indeed, Hawkes’s words are even more relevant given that they are part of a critique of Sir Walter Raleigh, the “English man” professing the wealth of the language, and of Shakespeare, during a period roughly contemporaneous with the production of school Readers in Australia.²⁷ Clearly, Shakespeare is a powerful ideological weapon, a central feature of the discipline of English, here represented in the reading books produced for Australian children. Finally, to borrow again from Hawkes’s incisive comments: “Our ‘Shakespeare’ is our invention: to read him is to write him” (124).

‘A mother’s pride’

As I argued in the introduction to this chapter, cultural circulation operates as part of an imperial economy in which “Britannia’s children” are involved in a dialogical

relationship with the mother country. In the following texts then, a fledgling Australian nation, and other former colonies of Britain “speak to” Empire. In this sense, the colonies reiterate and endorse an imperial ideal, promising eternal service to the Empire, and defence of the motherland. This aspect of the imperial curriculum is most strikingly observed in J. D. Burns’s “For England”, William Campbell’s “The Answer” and Roderic Quinn’s “The House of the Commonwealth”, all of which are published in *Victorian Readers Sixth Book* while Veronica Mason’s “Home” is published in the *Queensland Readers Book V* and Alexander Sutherland’s “Australia to England” appears in *The Adelaide Readers Book V*. These poems, in their insistence on the permanence of Empire, recall those imperial anxieties already explored here.

Burns’s “For England” performs the imperialist mother/child metaphor within the theatre of war, the ultimate test of patriotism. Burns, treated as a martyr following his death at Gallipoli, writes of the insistent call of the bugles of England, which can be heard blowing over the sea, a call to which the symbolic child of Empire must respond: “They woke me from dreaming in the dawning of the day,/The bugles of England – and how could I stay?” (55). Though Australia is only a fledgling nation, here represented as still dreaming in the dawning of the day, the nation’s duty (and that of her sons and daughters) is clear. The poem, a popular patriotic work in Australia and England, expresses the idealism of young Australian recruits called to the defence of Empire (Russell 57). Where the banners of England float out upon the wind, these beckoning banners refer to a powerful metanarrative sign that operates across school Readers. Unfurled across the ocean, the banners refer to English exploration and imperial conquest. Finally, in the third stanza, the cry of those who have already died for England can be heard “sounding like an organ-voice”. The echo of these ghostly voices and the noble sacrifice of which they speak heighten the poem’s already overtly patriotic sentiment: “They lived and died for England, and gladly went their way -/ England, O England – how could I stay?” (55). Moreover, the inculcation of imperialist ideology does not end with a reading of the poem. In the notes to this poem, prepared for further study and reflection, this paratextual

instance takes up the poem's repeated question: "What is the answer to the question, 'How could I stay?'" (227). Notably, the question, and presumably, an appreciation of the poem, presupposes *the* correct answer.

William Campbell, a Canadian, provides the correct response to Burns's question in his appropriately titled poem "The Answer". The Reader's notes to this text contextualise it as a poem specifically written to counter the notion that England's children would desert her: "When it was commonly said that the Colonies would fall away from England this poem was written to voice the love of the Dominions for the motherland" (227). While this poem is not written in relation to war it evokes similar ideals of indebtedness and loyalty. It is another instance of the parent-child metaphor, but yet again, the child is no dependent, and rather, offers hope and renewal. In an imperial economy then, British dominions do not simply "give back" to the centre. There is something much more complex going on that actually shifts power to the perceived margins, because without such a periphery, the centre cannot exist. The poem deconstructs an English centre, in a similar way to "For England", in the portrayal of a weakened and vulnerable England: "They whisper that you are dying,/ Mother of mine and me:/ Like a sick old eagle crying/ Out of the northern sea" (51). As an eagle, England is undoubtedly majestic, powerful. Yet this grace and power is diminished by age and failing health. The mother country is no longer that fertile and bountiful England, the feared home of early empire-building explorers nor the breeding ground of true heroes and great battles. Therefore, the Dominions, England's children, make a metaphoric return in order to shore up English foundations. Here is an instance of a symbolic economy of imperialism where the exchange that occurs destabilises a sense of England as centre: "But we answer, Mother, O Mother,/ Back to thy breast we come,/ We of thy breed, and seed, and none other/ From the beat of the alien drum" (51). The great English lineage, and pride in this inheritance, survives. Yet the poem acknowledges that the British race is being shaped by something alien, in turn creating something new and hybrid.

Contradictorily though, the voice of the alien poet ultimately seeks to reinstate an imperial mother-child metaphor where the mother is “true”. Given that the contingent nature of Empire has already been prefigured, however, this last effort to reposition imperial-colonial relations is ultimately unsuccessful. Nevertheless, it is a valiant attempt. Despite the seduction of the “new-world song” the poem professes, England’s children will return to her breast: “But, after the alien drum,/ After the alien tongue,/ Sweet to creep to the true, to the old,/ To the love that ever is young” (51).

Alexander Sutherland’s “Australia to England”, a reply to Tennyson’s “Hands All Round”, in *The Adelaide Readers Book V*, is a profoundly patriotic piece, where the model of Australian development is clearly predicated on a child-like relationship with England and empire. In response to Tennyson’s refrain “Hands all round”, Sutherland writes: “Hand in hand we’ll trace the ages,/ Stalwart children, mother hale./ Thou hast bred us, thou hast made us” (249). Significantly, in this poem, where the motherland is “hale”, the ideal of Empire is equally robust. Unlike the other examples considered above, this is not a portrait of an England in decline. Australia does not offer itself up as a restorative to imperial power. Rather, Australia follows where the mother leads. The Empire endures: “Lead thou on; we grasp thy hand ... By thy side thy sons will stand” (250).

In *The Queensland School Readers Book V*, Veronica Mason’s patriotic piece “Home” offers a reflection specifically upon the duality of national and imperial identities. The speaker of the poem, clearly the voice of a child, describes a fine old island across the world, home to the various metanarrative signs of an imperial curriculum: Shakespeare, Nelson, Drake and Wellington. It is also the home of the speaker’s Grandfather and Grannie who “lived there long ago” (112). And even as the child’s father and mother haven’t yet been there, both parents call it *home*. At this point, the poem seems almost to promise something different, a questioning perhaps of this place circumscribed “home”. Indeed, the speaker recognises this place as ethereal, other-worldly. For the child, “it seems a Land of Dreams” (112).

Despite being well-versed in all signs English, “the noble Thames”, “St Paul’s great dome” and “the cowslip fields in Spring”, the child identifies herself as “a small Tasmanian”. Yet, even as it promises to intervene in the discursive modes of an imperial curriculum, the poem reasserts the primacy of the isle of dreams: “For *I* belong to *It*, you see,/ And *It* belongs to Mine and Me,/ So *I* shall call it – *Home*” (114).

Finally, Roderic Quinn’s poem “The House of the Commonwealth” is designed to cement an inviolable relationship between the youthful Australian nation and “Mother England”. Australian Federation is represented as a “stately house”, an inviting, hospitable house. “With tables spread,/ Where men in liberty and love abide/ With hearts akin” (221). Here the young Australia claims a vitality and purity that is reminiscent of the motherland herself. Indeed, the literary tropes of English fertility and blessedness are adopted by the glorious young nation. “Behold, how high our hands have lifted it!/ The soil it stands upon is pure and sweet/ As are our skies” (221) “The House of the Commonwealth” also portrays an unblemished and selective memory of Australia’s past, the desire for innocence and forgetfulness. “Our title-deeds in holy sweat are writ,/ Not red, accusing blood; and ‘neath our feet/ No foeman lies” (221).

The poem suggests that Australia’s Federation rejuvenates England and inspires a profound sense of motherly pride in the growth of her offspring. “And England, Mother England, leans her face/ Upon her hand, and feels her blood burn young at what she sees” (221). Australia literally becomes a younger, stronger England, the image of the motherland in her own heady days of greatness. “The image here of that fair strength and grace/ That made her feared and loved and sought and sung/ Through centuries” (221). Significantly, there is a kind of literary self-awareness in the poem, an acknowledgement of its debt to the literary effects of the mother country. Just as England was “sung” throughout the centuries, Australia must write itself into adulthood.

The notes refer to "The House of the Commonwealth" as a "noble poem" (244). Students are directed to examine the poem carefully to see how the finer part of Australia is exalted above the baser. The suggestion is that the finer part of Australia is that which emulates a glorious England. The finer qualities of Australia, the nation's sweet soil, its fair strength and grace – even the notion that it houses men in liberty and love with hearts akin – these are the idealised qualities of a noble England. Yet there is another reading available in this question, one that presents a kind of counter-discourse to the Readers' dominant representation of national growth. This alternative reading is made more explicit in another question to appear in the notes. "Is it true that it [the stately house] has been built by holy toil, and not by conquest?" (244). Clearly, this question suggests some acknowledgement of Australia's blood-stained past in relation to its dispossession of the Aboriginal people. The question's foregrounding of the very idea of "conquest" provides readers with an entry point into an alternative reading of Australian history. This alternative reading, a shadowy past dominated by problems of absence and presence, is my focus in the next chapter.

Notes:

¹ Some examples of these kinds of texts that appear in school Readers include (but are not restricted to): “September in Australia”, “The Australian Sunrise”, “The Song of Australia”, “Australia Fair”, “The Bush” and “Where the Wattle Blooms”.

² On this note, William Cowper’s poem “Boadicea” appears in *The Victorian Readers Sixth Book*.

³ In the *Queensland School Readers Book V*, John Richard Jefferies’ “The July Grass” is an essay about the fecundity and unparalleled beauty of the English countryside. Like Wordsworth’s “Daffodils”, the wanderer in this essay discovers “all things that are beautiful are found by chance, like everything that is good” (288). Coming across a profusion of “bird’s-foot lotus” is an unexpected pleasure: “It is so common, the bird’s-foot lotus, it grows everywhere; yet if I purposely searched for days I should not have found a plot like this, so rich, so golden, so glowing with sunshine” (289). Like the cultural memories attributed to the daffodils: “it is worthy to be thought of for a week, and remembered for a year” (289).

⁴ Of course, Mackellar opens her poem with an evocation of a “green” and “ordered” English landscape, only to contrast it with her love for the “wide brown land” (1).

⁵ This particular poem and its simultaneously alienating and loved English and Imperial imaginings are notably referenced in post-colonial fiction, for example in Jamaica Kincaid’s *Lucy* and Jean Rhys’ “The Day They Burned the Books”. Indeed, the split subjectivity that occurs as a result of a colonial education is so significant a trope that the fissure has been referred to in post-colonial theory as the “daffodil gap” (Tiffin 920). While Lucy bears the psychic scars of memorising and reciting “I wandered lonely as a cloud” while at school in Antigua, the narrator of Rhys’s story, “tired of learning and reciting poems in praise of daffodils”, reveals something much more than this educational dislocation in an account of loss at the intersection of race, colonialism and literature (39).

⁶ In his study *Wordsworth and the Formation of English Studies*, Ian Reid argues that a Wordsworthian-inspired literary pedagogy survived up until the 1970s in the English Department at the University of Melbourne (145-163). Meanwhile, “Daffodils” was included as part of the revised editions of school Readers of the 1940s (often still in use in the 1950s and 60s).

⁷ This essay is sourced from *England’s Forgotten Worthies* from *Short Studies, Volume 1*. Its historian author, James Anthony Froude, wrote *The History of England*, published in twelve volumes, 1856-1870. Interestingly, the Reader notes to this essay add that Froude visited Australia in 1885, recognising the interlinked history of England and Australia (213).

⁸ The Elizabethan seamen feted by this essay include Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh. These historic figures are favoured English heroes and stories about their exploits appear across school Readers. Other celebrations of Drake include, “Drake and the Armada” in *The Swan School Reader Book V*, “Drake’s Capture of the Spanish Treasure Ship” in the *Queensland School Readers Book VI* and “Drake’s Voyage Round the World”, also in the *Western Australian Swan School Reader Book V*. Another Elizabethan hero, Sir Philip Sidney, is the sole subject of an essay in the *Queensland School Readers Book III* in which the “compiled” narrative lauds his embodiment of “all that was best in the age in which he lived, an age famous for learning, adventure, and courage” (188).

⁹ *The Tasmanian Readers Grade VI* instead includes Kipling's "The Flowers". An excerpt from Kipling's *Kim*, entitled "The Grand Trunk Road of India", is published in the same Tasmanian Reader and Kipling's "The Ballad of East and West" also appears in the *New Australian School Series Fifth Reader*.

¹⁰ Desmond Gibbs notes the controversy the omission caused when, in Victoria in 1932, Rudyard Kipling's London literary agents objected to the poem's "mutilation". Demonstrating the poem's anxieties and ambivalences, the editor had removed the lines due to concerns about potentially antagonistic "local and temporal allusions" (221). The contentious stanzas follow:

Winds of the World, give answer! They are whimpering to and fro --□
And what should they know of England who only England know? --□
The poor little street-bred people that vapour and fume and brag,□
They are lifting their heads in the stillness to yelp at the English Flag!□□

Must we borrow a clout from the Boer -- to plaster anew with dirt?□
An Irish liar's bandage, or an English coward's shirt?□
We may not speak of England; her Flag's to sell or share.□
What is the Flag of England? Winds of the World, declare!

¹¹ In *The Victorian Readers Seventh Book*, Alfred Austin's "Britain and America" enacts/performs the same imperial anxieties.

¹² "Vitai Lampada" appears in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade IV*, *Queensland School Readers Book V* and the *Western Australian Readers Book VI*.

¹³ Kendall's concern with the passing of a majestic race is also referenced in his poem "The Last of His Tribe", included in school Readers and addressed in the next chapter of this thesis where problems of Aboriginal presence and absence are more fully explored.

¹⁴ This poem first appeared in *An Anthology of Australian Verse*, edited by Bertram Stevens and published by Angus and Robertson in Sydney in 1907 (154-55).

¹⁵ O'Hara's indebtedness to other poets is more obvious in his work "Happy Creek." This poem owes a great deal to Tennyson's "The Brook" and, like "The Brook", is reproduced in school Readers, in *The Victorian Readers Sixth Book*.

¹⁶ Sir Henry Newbolt wrote "Vitai Lampada", and his poem "Drake's Drum" is published in the *The Victorian Readers Seventh Book*. Even more famously, Newbolt chaired the committee responsible for producing what is now commonly referred to as the "Newbolt Report". This report, entitled *The Teaching of English in England*, was presented to the Board of Education in 1921. Parallels can be drawn with an Australian educational apparatus, particularly the disciplining of English Literature. As Jackie Marsh observes of the report: "This was an influential document in terms of its emphasis on the need to introduce children to an established canon of literature in order to develop a sense of nationhood" (250). (Marsh, J. "The Primary Canon: A Critical Review." *British Journal of Educational Studies*. 52.3 (2004): 249-62.)

¹⁷ Further demonstrating the cache of the Captain Cook legend in a metanarrative of national growth, "Cook's Voyage in the 'Endeavour'" is published in *The Swan School Reader Fifth Book* (WA).

¹⁸ "Sir Richard Grenville's Last Fight" is also published in *The Adelaide Readers Book V*. "The Revenge" also appears in the *The Swan School Reader Book V*.

¹⁹ An excerpt from another of Tennyson's poems of a brave British victory, "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington", appears in the *Queensland School Readers Book V*. The Duke of Wellington provided another popularly heroic British figure. Reflecting this, "Waterloo", an excerpt from William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, is published in the same Queensland Reader. Perhaps most significantly for readings of an imperial curriculum, an excerpt reads: "The tale is in every Englishman's mouth; and you and I, who were children when the great battle was won and lost, are never tired of hearing and recounting the history of that famous action" (125). Another "Waterloo", this time the poem written by Lord Byron, appears in *The Victorian Readers Seventh Book*.

²⁰ Another "war song" written by Thomas Campbell, "Ye Mariners of England", is published in the *Queensland School Readers Book IV* and in the *Western Australian Reader Book VI*.

²¹ The Government of England had declared it would search all neutral ships to prevent trade with France. In 1800 Russia, Sweden, Prussia and Denmark formed an alliance to oppose this claim. Lord Nelson was second in command of a fleet of English ships charged with breaking up the alliance. The battle of the Baltic occurred when Nelson led an advance squadron into the Danish harbour of Copenhagen.

²² "The Death of Nelson" is also published in *The Adelaide Readers Book V*. Underscoring both its significance and its longevity, Southey's *Life of Nelson* was suggested as supplementary reading for Class V and as suitable for school libraries in the 1890 South Australian course of instruction (Nimon 231). Indeed, the excerpt "The Death of Nelson" had already appeared in the Chambers's English Readers Book V of 1889 (Nimon 231).

²³ "The Burial of Sir John Moore" also appears in the *Queensland School Readers Book IV*.

²⁴ Other celebrations of Gordon as a "hero among heroes" include "Gallant Gordon" in the *Queensland Readers Book IV* and "The Gallant Gordon" in the *Western Australian Reader Book VI*. In *The Adelaide Readers Book V*, "The Funeral of Gordon" is adapted from G. W. Stevens' *With Kitchener to Khartum*.

²⁵ As Dixon rightly observes, Gordon also points to imperial insecurities. Dixon writes: "More than any other events before the Boer War, the invasion of Egypt in 1882 and the death of Gordon at Khartoum in 1885 fuelled British anxieties" (3).

²⁶ Other stories of British bravery of a distinctly imperialist tone and flavour are those battles fought over its colonies in Africa and the sub-continent. While I have not focussed on India here, Flora Annie Steel's "Heroes of the Mutiny", from her 1893 novel *On the Face of the Waters*, appears in the *Queensland School Readers Book V* and George John Whyte Melville's poem about British valour during the Mutiny, entitled "The Victoria Cross", appears in the same Queensland Reader. Of South Africa and the Anglo-Boer War, "Roberts of Kandahar"

is published in the *Queensland School Readers Book IV* and “The Defence of Rorke’s Drift”, a battle during the Anglo-Zulu Wars, appears in the *Queensland School Readers Book VI*.

²⁷ There are some further points to be made here about synchronicity and school Readers. Most obviously, this is the same Sir Walter Raleigh responsible for producing the heroic martial spirit of “Sir Richard Grenville’s Last Fight” (in the Tasmanian and Adelaide Readers). Reflecting broader concerns about the English language and Empire though, Raleigh presented this lecture, entitled “Some Gains of The War”, in 1918, following the entry of America into the First World War. Hence, Raleigh’s position as described by Hawkes: “The ‘special relationship’ between Britain and the United States was and is based on a common language, representing the full flowering of the linguistic seeds planted by the Elizabethan colonizers [...] Raleigh was making it clear that the major gain of American involvement in Europe would surely be the subsequent dominance of Prospero’s English over Caliban’s German” (65).

Traces of Aboriginality: Ambivalence and Anxiety

Across school reading series, Aboriginal peoples are almost always absent. In effect, this absence insists upon silence, the silencing of Aboriginal voices, and the silencing of alternative stories of nation. Absence and silence are crucial to a white national imaginary. In this story the Australian landscape is both psychically and physically empty of the spectral presences of its first peoples. Where metanarrative signs argue for absence, Aboriginal peoples are written out of those explorer narratives already considered; “they” are the lost tribes, mere savages, items of anthropological interest. Similarly, according to encoded and encoding ideologies of race and evolution, Australia’s remaining Aboriginal peoples are *pale* imitators of an authentic, pre-colonial past.¹ Indeed, reflecting what she sees as the cultural work of school texts, Bradford aptly terms these books “mechanisms of forgetfulness” (*Reading Race* 21). In her choice of language, where textbooks can be read as “mechanisms”, Bradford fruitfully recognises the textbook production of Aboriginal absence as an institutionalised process. In his 1996 monograph, *To be an Australian? Victorian School Textbooks and National Identity 1895-1965*, Musgrave makes a similar observation. In terms of invitations to the Australian body politic in school texts, Musgrave identifies Australia’s original inhabitants as “one taken-for-granted omission” (31). Musgrave notes that depictions of Aboriginal peoples in school

reading materials are limited to their production as anthropological curiosities, as hostile but useful guides, as people of low cultural status and, most significantly, as people whose passing is inevitable (31-3). In broad terms then, existing studies have already identified Australian Aboriginal peoples as those dispossessed by a particular kind of national imaginary as produced by school textbooks.

More importantly to my critique, however, Bradford's idea of the textbook as a "mechanism" has another application here. In suggesting something mechanised and mechanical about the production of Aboriginal absence, this term usefully points to that which is unconscious and automatic about sharing in an amnesiac national imaginary within the institutional setting. To my reading then, the mechanised replication of forgetting evidenced in school Readers is symptomatic of a barely-concealed anxiety about indigenous stories and how they might impinge upon a national metanarrative. The repetitive figuring of Aboriginal absence, silence, and inauthenticity insists on an idea that soothes and reassures an unsettled white settler psyche. Yet, the mantra for forgetting, the school Reader codes for absence and amnesia, only serve to highlight and draw attention to that which is made peripheral, concealed or denied. For the construction of Aboriginal absence, even in semiotic terms (the terms upon which a Reader metanarrative so heavily relies), is an already doomed project. In insisting upon the absence of Australian Aboriginal peoples, those peoples must first be remembered, figured and made present. So, for a school Reader story of national growth, textual traces that simultaneously suggest both Aboriginal absence *and* Aboriginal presence interlace a national imaginary in what is an increasingly ambivalent portrait of self. The problematic, fragmentary and resonant traces of Aboriginality in school Readers are far more complex and difficult than absolute absence or absolute denial.

In arguing for the highly ambivalent nature of Aboriginal representation in school Readers, there is another important element to my critique, colonial desire. This desire encompasses what Hodge and Mishra term "Aboriginalism", but in terms of reading metanarrative signs, it goes further than this.² In describing Aboriginalism,

Hodge and Mishra draw on Said's conceptualisation of "Orientalism" to refer to discursive regimes that silence and fetishise the colonised "Other" (27). What I refer to as colonial desire takes in these ideas but also recognises that, in a specifically Australian context, a white settler community can never sufficiently "other" Aboriginal peoples. Nor do white settlers want to be like Aboriginal peoples as much as they want to belong to the land like Aboriginal peoples. It is an important distinction. In this sense, Australian Aboriginal peoples, their deep past, especially their perceived knowledge of, and kinship with, an Australian natural environment, are selectively subsumed into ideas of Australianness. Aboriginalism works to define Aboriginality so that white settlers, in their desire to be recognisably native, can more effectively appropriate "signs" of Aboriginality. This desire to become native, the literary construction of the "white indigene" is usefully examined in Terry Goldie's study of the image of the indigene in Australian, Canadian and New Zealand literatures (13). Goldie observes that this indigenisation process is apparent in national literatures uneasy about their own alien selves. It is an attempt, to use Goldie's phrase, "to erase this separation of belonging" (12). School Readers are marked by the tension inherent in this process. On the one hand, Aboriginal peoples must be separated (made "other") so as to be powerless, silent objects for appropriation. On the other hand though, erasing this same separation, *becoming* "the other" so to speak, provides exactly that sense of belonging so desired by the colonial subject. Aboriginalism, a kind of reification and consumption of Aboriginality through retellings and re-productions of oral texts and via anthropological texts, is a common encoding of white superiority and power across school Readers. Yet, at the same time, this encoding is deconstructed by the resistant presence of Aboriginal peoples and what they represent, indigeneity and legitimacy, that in turn informs the construction of a national imaginary and its concomitant anxieties. Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs draw on Freud's essay on the "uncanny" to describe this feeling of being in place at the same time as feeling out of place: "We often speak of Australia as a 'settler' nation, but the 'uncanny' can remind us that a condition of unsettledness folds into this taken-for-granted mode of occupation" (24).

There are several bodies of school Reader texts relevant to this discussion. These groupings, as they are defined by broader problems of desire, denial, presence or absence, are loosely laid out alongside each other in this chapter to provide a sense of the kinds of Aboriginality produced, omitted, or indeed, re-produced in school Readers. Revisiting some texts already explored in previous chapters will further problematise readings of national symbolism in the figure of the child and the metanarrative's reliance upon the structures and signs of an English colonialist imperialism. The groupings explored here are suggested by textual constructions of Aboriginality, the way in which school Reader narratives interact to create prismatic effects, multiple images of Aboriginal Australians that ultimately disavow a cohesive narrative of the birth and development of a white nation. In particular, I am interested in reading for signs of resistance, even in those stories intended to signify a grand white narrative of Australia and Australianness.

Black around the edges – revisiting stories of lost and brave children

I want now to return to some texts previously explored in this study in relation to discourses of children and childhood. "A Brave Australian Girl" and "Lost in the Bush", in particular, reveal a haunting Aboriginal presence at the margins of narratives about Australian growth. In both stories Aboriginal men are made secondary to the figure of the child. To a greater or lesser degree, the time-worn literary tropes of a colonising discourse attempt to hide and silence these men. Yet the story of the child is inevitably intertwined with the story of the Aboriginal. A brave and innocent Australia embodied in the spirit of the child is dependant upon protection and assistance provided by the nation's original inhabitants. At one level, the figure of the child overshadows that of the Aborigine in an attempt to more persuasively stake a white Australian claim to the land. At the same time, however, the Aborigine cannot be entirely written out of the past. He (it is almost always a he) is disturbingly a part of Australian mythologies and cultural histories. He is witness to the trials and to the growth of the nation's young.

In "A Brave Australian Girl", representations of Aboriginality are marred by forces of denial. The title alone effectively shifts the focus from what is equally a tale of Aboriginal heroism. Instead, it is the white Australian girl who is central to the narrative as both the focalised and as the real "hero" of the story. The introduction is also significant. Although it becomes apparent during the narrative that an Aboriginal man is also instrumental in rescuing the victims of a shipwreck, he is notably absent in the story's opening. The introduction reads: "That a girl could save between forty and fifty people from death by drowning seems hardly possible, and yet that is what Grace Bussell did" (*Victorian Readers* 85). Indeed, the Aboriginal hero of the narrative is only introduced in fixed relational terms, his presence dependent on Grace. She is "*attended by a black servant*" (my emphasis) when "she" catches sight of the vessel in distress (86). Further underscoring a sense of the Aboriginal man's lack of agency, Grace is the first to reach the sea; he merely "follows" (87). As the tale continues, the construction of the Aboriginal man as servant and follower is repetitive and powerful: "Grace and the faithful blackfellow went backwards and forwards for four hours, till all were safe on land" (87-8). Most significantly, *he* does not have a name. Grace, by contrast, is an inspirational leader, and she is celebrated as such. The story concludes: "Grace and her brave servant well deserved the Royal Humane Society's medal, which was presented to each of them on the 8th of January, 1878" (88). What is so striking about this narrative then, is that in spite of a textual construction which positions him as marginal, insignificant and powerless, the Aboriginal man surfaces as an integral element of the tale. Simply put, Grace did not act single-handedly, and thus the text cannot entirely ignore the Aboriginal man's presence. Though the man's identity has been elided by dint of his namelessness, and although the narrative works hard at preserving the Readers' forgetfulness, his presence at the edges is enough to interject in, even to disrupt, a nation's imagining of itself as young, brave and white.

The story reappears, this time entitled "An Australian Heroine" in *The Adelaide Readers Book V*. While the politics of representation remain central to a critique of this particular narrative, this version does offer more ambivalent and complex

readings of gender, race, agency and power, at least initially. Though the narrative attempts to conclusively resist any such alternative readings well before the story's close, a fine web of fractured identities is predicated as the story of heroism begins: Grace, the free-spirited colonial girl, is contradictorily contained within a domestic interior, "busy in the kitchen of her station home", when she is interrupted by "the hasty arrival of a half-caste stockman" (106). The stockman's half-caste status, noted so specifically here, points to a recurrent, persistent anxiety or tension that undermines a story of national growth: race and the problems of repression, liminality and hybridity. Importantly too, in this story, the stockman is named. He is Sam Isaacs and initially at least, there is a greater sense of Sam's equality and agency. Despite the dis-qualification that Sam is "a faithful servant of her father", he and Grace are clearly *equal* to the task: "Undeterred by the storm which was breaking around *them*, through the bush *they* sped at breakneck pace" [my emphases] (106). However, given that something dangerously akin to a counter-discourse of Australian growth is raised here, the narrative shifts to reinstate the central presence of the brave Australian girl, "a mere slip of a girl", as the true hero of the story (108). It is already too late. The alternative readings by now glimpsed beneath the surface detract from the story's usefulness as a metanarrative sign. Of course, a Reader metanarrative is always unsettled by overt and covert codings of indigenous resistance. While Sam Isaacs' appearance is a subtler sign of indigenous resistance, a different kind of wide-scale resistance, an instance of the Australian frontier wars, is memorialised in "A Brave Boy" in *The Adelaide Readers Book II*.

"A Brave Boy" attempts to legitimise European claims to a local landscape while simultaneously disinheriting the region's Aboriginal peoples. But, in so doing, the narrative draws attention to indigenous resistance and thus to what is clearly theft. The narrative traces European movement across the physical spaces now known as South Australia, recording the cultivation and transformation of those areas identifiable by marks on a European map of discovery and usurpation. "When the first white people came to South Australia, they settled on the strip of country lying between the hills and the sea, and which is called the Adelaide Plain, because on it

Light laid out the city of Adelaide [...] When more and more settlers arrived [...] many moved into the hills which we call the Mount Lofty Range [...] Others went north to the district round what is now the town of Gawler" (129-30). Aboriginal people, and their resistance (or otherwise) to this transformation of the landscape is simultaneously recorded. While the natives of the Adelaide plain "were a gentle tribe, and the settlers were not troubled by them ... in other parts of the country they were fierce and warlike, and sometimes settlers were robbed and even killed by them" (130). The brave boy of the story's title is among the earliest of these European settler families at Port Lincoln. The narrative that unfolds is presented as an account of the cost of South Australia's development for white people. At the same time though, it points to the cost of settlement for Aboriginal peoples. Frank Hawson, a lad of thirteen, is alone in the family's hut when surprised by the sudden appearance of "twenty-two natives, who had silently crept up, and were holding their spears ready to throw at him" (131). After a spear strikes him in the chest, Frank takes up his father's gun, aims, and shoots one of the blacks. Importantly, the Aboriginal people are depicted here as the invaders, cowardly interlopers dangerous enough to attack a single white child. "The others ran off, too afraid to face one white boy with a gun" (132). It is Frank's version of events that is preserved in the Readers. Despite his injury, the boy survives another eight days, and so is able to share the story with his parents. Frank's act is framed by the text as a singularly courageous one – in scaring off the Aboriginal people, he saves the food in the hut, and therefore the lives of his parents, brothers and sisters (132).

In terms of the Readers and their memory work, however, this narrative is most significant for the way in which it serves to historicise black resistance to white occupation. The story also points to the constructedness of national histories - the importance of telling stories to preserve a version of the past. Frank is buried in the scrub but more than sixty years later, during railway construction between Port Lincoln and the outback country, his grave is discovered: "This reminded people of the story of brave little Frank Hawson, and a monument to his memory now stands on the hillside near his home" (133).³ The story itself, is, at the same time, a

monument to frontier wars, something that is largely ignored across school Readers – this is perhaps the most overt instance of this aspect of Australian history in school readers.

“Lost in the Bush” reveals a deeply ambivalent instance of national storytelling, an Aboriginal presence that is both marginalised, yet central to, a narrative of Australia’s growth. In the second part of “Lost in the Bush”, focalisation switches to the parents of the lost children, effectively highlighting their inability to protect their own children. As the day grows late and the children do not return from their errand, the mother goes into the scrub and “cooe[s] for them till she was hoarse” (64). When he returns home from work, the father also searches “till long after dark, but in vain” (64). The next day, help from all the nearest neighbours is enlisted, and “before dinner-time, a score of willing people – men and women – were scouring the scrub in various directions” (64). The search continues for three more days before hope is restored at the arrival of “two or three blackfellows” who are employed as boundary riders at a nearby station.

Already the narrative reveals the tensions inherent in the Readers’ construction of indigenous identities. The Aboriginal men are fundamental to ensuring the children’s future. This is evidenced in the detailed description of what has been a fruitless search to this point. Indeed, the mother had begun “to lose hope of ever seeing her darlings again” (64). Yet the Aboriginal men are also depicted in a mockery of their importance to the story’s symbolic purpose: “A monarch, King Richard (better known as Dicky), and two subjects, Jerry and Fred – arrived on Wednesday” (65). The derisive labelling of the trackers as “monarch” and “subjects” undermines their tangible roles in white settler survival. Replete with Australianised nicknames, the black trackers are made humorous, mere shadows of former greatness. They are positioned as lesser than those they will save. As boundary riders, they imitate an authentic Aboriginality and as such, their skilfulness as trackers is questioned: “The blacks led on so many miles into the bush that the white men began to think their tracking was all a sham” (65-6). It is

significant I think that in stories of lost children (of which there are several in school Readers), authentic Aboriginality is associated with the ability to locate and uncover white traces on the Australian landscape - just as Aboriginality often produces enigmatic traces in the Readers themselves.

In contrast to representations of the trackers, the narrative insists on the father's heroism, his restless energy during an unrelenting search for his missing children. "How the father must have suffered through those hours, and how eagerly he must have watched for the first streaks of the coming dawn" (66). Yet it is Dicky, the Aboriginal man, who undeniably represents the children's real hope. Walking ahead, he points to signs of the children's sleeping places and evidence of their movements. In a familiar strategy of colonial texts however, the discourse of denial intercepts the emerging image of white Australian dependency on Aboriginal people. Dicky is more comfortably re-positioned as a caricature of the "simple" native via his awkward speech patterns: "Him been lose him. Him been sit down. Mine t'ink it him plenty cry" (67). Significantly, with the children's discovery, the father's inadequacy becomes apparent. In a weak voice the youngest child Frank reminds his father of his absence: "Daddy, daddy, we cooeed for you but you didn't come" (68). Indeed, it is only through the presence of the Aboriginal men that the children's innocence is preserved. The children's parents are not mentioned again in the narrative. Instead, the black trackers are briefly brought back into focus:

When they were found, the blacks laughed and cried, and rolled on the ground for joy; and Dicky (we may well call him King Richard now), springing on a horse that belonged to one of the party, gave his last order, "Me take gal home"; and Jane was handed up to him. (69)

In a typically contradictory way, Dicky and his "subjects" are both celebrated and diminished by their undisguised happiness at finding the children alive. Their actions upon the discovery of the children, laughing, crying and rolling on the ground, suggest the Aboriginal man's child-like, simple nature. Dicky is grudgingly allowed the term "King Richard" and accordingly, he gives orders. Yet his status

and his order are mediated by his need to borrow a horse in order to take home the “gal”. Importantly, his “kingly” status is clearly a tenuous one, dependent on what “we” may choose to call him. In terms of the contradictions, however, King Richard’s prize-like appropriation of the white Australian girl is richest in its potential counter-discourse to a sacred metanarrative of national growth in the Readers. Jane is both chaste and virtuous, yet she is a highly sexualised figure. As reproductive site of the nation, it is significant that Jane is “handed up” to an Aboriginal man who is going to take her “home”. The symbolic union between a young Australia’s innocence and a no longer innocent and displaced people can be read as a fissure in national constructions of self where denial of Aboriginal identities and desires for Aboriginal knowledge and cultures simultaneously connect with, and recoil from, one another.

In *The Adelaide Readers Book II* the story of the same lost children and their Aboriginal saviours, also entitled “Lost in the Bush”, is adapted and retold from a fictional first-person perspective. In this version of the well-known narrative, the narrator relates the story to his grandchildren, revealing: “I like to tell this tale, because it shows that, through much hardship and suffering, they were brave and noble-hearted” (118). Of course, “they” to whom the narrator refers are the lost children. The brave and noble-hearted Aboriginal Australians who locate the wandering innocents are notably absent, even from introductions to the story, until they are “sent for”, almost two-thirds of the way into the narrative. At this point, as in the Victorian version (presumably, both are adapted from the same source, probably Fairclough), the children’s parents and other searchers have found no trace of the missing children. Again then, problems of presence and absence intervene in the ways in which this particular story is encoded as a metanarrative sign. The trackers, all Aboriginal men, are fundamentally inseparable from a story of white survival that the children, and especially Jane, represent.⁴ In this way, the shadowy figures of a repressed past must somehow be narratologically and psychically negotiated. So, in a fairly unsophisticated but common textual manoeuvre, one that importantly reasserts the ideological superiority of whiteness,

the narrator likens Aboriginal peoples to animals: "The Australian blacks can follow a trail almost as easily as a dog follows the scent of its master. Their eyes are very sharp, and they find traces where a white man can see nothing" (124). Most significantly for readings of race, however, upon discovery the children embody the return of the repressed. Occupying that liminal space between life and death, "All dying, yet alive!", the children are uncannily interchangeable with metanarrative codings of Aboriginality in school Readers. Australia's indigenous peoples are dying, yet alive. Even as these peoples are relegated to the past, set to disappear amongst the dead and dying, they appear and reappear in white imaginings of self.

Imperial visions: Constructions of Aboriginality in the colonial adventure story

As I have argued, stories of Aboriginal heroes intertwined with stories of bush-lost and brave Australian children offer ways of reading against the grain. These textual spaces accommodate signs of resistance to an overarching narrative of national growth. In contrast, the colonial adventure story is more rigidly constructed within the framework of a colonising discourse. In this way, the racist codes in which the metanarrative signifies are largely reinforced and upheld. Within this genre, a fairly simplistic binary opposition operates: white Europeans are infinitely superior to the indigenous peoples whose lands they have invaded. As considerable scholarship has already demonstrated, adventure stories set in the outposts of empire are a significant form of imperialist ideology.⁵ Yet, similarly to recurrent Australian anxieties about innocence, identity and inheritance, as played out in stories of bush-lost and brave Australian children, the colonial adventure story rehearses fears about the decline of the British Empire. In my last chapter I examined metanarrative signs of imperial greatness as they are interwoven into a story of Australian development. The considerable emphasis on Empire in school Readers reflects Bernard Porter's diagnosis that an ailing Empire spawns a re-assertion of the imperial ideal. Porter writes: "'imperialism' [...] was, for Britain, a symptom and an effect of her decline in the world, and not of strength" (qtd in Dixon 2). In school Readers, this is particularly evident in the repetition of the adventure story, with its

reassuring codings of imperialism, masculinity and whiteness.⁶ In his 1995 study of the colonial adventure story in Anglo-Australian fiction, *Writing the Colonial Adventure*, Dixon makes the same point about the adventure story and its homely comforts: “The popularity of ripping yarns from the 1870s down to World War I can [...] be attributed to their perceived role as an antidote to the degeneration and feminising of the race, and to their accessible fantasy of masculine and Anglo-Saxon supremacy in a world turned upside down” (5). Transplanting fears to the antipodes, literally the world turned upside down, enables concerns about racial decline and cultural decadence to be made manifest, but within the safe confines of the adventure story genre, in which British male whiteness will always win out in the end. Where adventure stories offer tantalising glimpses of the excitement and glory to be found in distant, exotic and unreal landscapes, they equally provide a rite of passage for the civilised hero and a re-assertion of the society he represents. In his geography of adventure, *Mapping Men and Empire*, Richard Phillips describes the imperial imagination and its adventurous conception: “In the liminal geography of adventure, the hero encounters a topsy-turvy reflection of home, in which constructions of home and away are temporarily disrupted, before being reinscribed or reordered, in either case reconstituted” (13). As will become clear in the following readings of adventure stories in school Readers, a radically different colonial world, an unknown and dangerous landscape inhabited by wild natives and threatened by even wilder natural disasters, is first posited as a threat to white masculinity before order is re-established. As a constructed cultural space necessary to enacting imperial masculinities, the Australian colonial adventure story is entirely concerned with representing Aboriginal peoples as degenerate and inferior (and this supposed degeneration is the unspoken danger these peoples really represent for the European race). In the abstract, imagined world of the colonial adventure, “evidence” of Aboriginal inferiority is a warning to an increasingly complacent and feminised British society as much as it is an affirmation of British superiority.

“A Fiery Ordeal” by Alfred St Johnston, in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade IV* and in the *Adelaide Readers Book IV*, positions two English lads and Murri, a “native guide”,

against that quintessentially Australian natural disaster, the bushfire.⁷ It is significant that the story acknowledges the presence of an indigenous man in his capacity as a guide to the English adventurers. In this way, a European reliance on local knowledge is made apparent and the adventuring paradigm is disrupted so that, as in stories of lost children, Australian Aborigines resist being totalised as inferior peoples. The figure of Murri as guide also negates a metanarrative coding of Australia's emptiness, its unknown, unmapped qualities, a common trope in colonial adventure stories, and also prevalent in those examples of Australian explorer narratives considered in the previous chapter. Murri clearly knows the land and, more importantly, his particular knowledge of the land is validated by a European presence. Contradictorily, however, the usual threats to the young English adventurer, the hostile landscape and the hostile natives, are effectively aligned in this narrative. While Murri is useful as a guide, Aboriginal peoples are nevertheless hostile. Upon seeing a "copper-coloured cloud" in the west, the two lads and their guide are certain as to the fire's origin: "The little party knew well what this meant. Some natives had carelessly left their camp-fire burning, and it had set fire to the bush" (*Tasmanian Readers* 222). While the "natives" are not represented as having any malevolent intent in starting the bushfire, the connection between the Aboriginal people and the fire is clear. In this way, when the English lads prove themselves better than a roaring bushfire (as they inevitably will) they are also demonstrably superior to the Aboriginal people at its genesis.

Ambivalent constructions of Aboriginality remain at odds throughout this narrative. After conferring amongst themselves as to the best way to defeat the fire's rapid advance, the English brothers Alec and George Law turn to their native guide for advice. Similar to the representation of black trackers in the *Readers*, Murri is clearly expert in reading his environment: "The black had been carefully scanning the advancing line of smoke; and, from what he said, it was understood that the fire was already too extended for them to think of riding round it" (223). The boys trust in Murri's suggestion that they ride towards the fire in an attempt to reach the rocks at Noo-er-gup, even as it appears irrational: "It seemed like courting death to ride

straight into the teeth of the fire; but they had great faith in Murri, so they acted as he advised" (223). While the imperialist agenda and usual structure of boys' adventure stories is somewhat subverted here as Alec and George are demonstrably dependent on Murri for their survival, the re-ordering of this upside down world soon occurs. True to the formulaic adventure story, Murri fades into the background as the excitement and drama build. The boys are the focalised; it is they who recognise that their lives depend upon speed, it is their eyes that seem dry within their sockets (223-4). Although Murri points out the potential refuge, it is the English lad Alec who is ultimately the hero.⁸ Having ensured his brother's safety, his bravery suggests only "one last chance" for himself and Murri as they face the fire and its "unbroken front" (225-226). Murri is now only secondary to the action. He is effectively disempowered as Alec takes charge and shouts instructions: "The black, if he did not hear, at any rate understood what was wanted and *obeyed like a child*" [my emphasis] (227). The reversal of Alec's dependency on Murri ensures the natural order is restored. As the white man he is leader, whereas Murri is child-like in his obedience. This effectively reinstates the coloniser/colonised binary. Representations of Aboriginal people as infantile, referenced in both lost children narratives and adventure stories, is a repetitive strategy of colonial discourse. In this way, colonised races can be viewed as backward and degenerate (Bradford "Textuality and colonization" 97). Given that many of these stories also involve children within focalisations, the depiction of the permanently infantile state of Aboriginal people is a powerful discursive tool. As Bradford argues: "When ... the focalisers are themselves children, the chasm between colonisers and the colonised is particularly potent, since what is inscribed is a temporal contrast, between black people in a state of fixity, arrested in a childhood from which they will never develop, and white children who will one day be adults" ("Textuality and colonization" 97). In the dramatic final passages of the tale Murri is no longer referred to by name. Like Grace Bussell's servant in "A Brave Australian Girl", he is merely "the black" (227).

Conrad Sayce's "At the Flooded Creek", in the *Victorian Readers Fifth Book*, provides another example of the uncertainty that permeates the colonial adventure story and its subsequent invocation of Aboriginality. As in St Johnston's story, deep understandings of the outback are keenly acknowledged as evidence of "belonging" to the land. Yet, in the first of many contradictions, only the translocation of local Aboriginal knowledge within Eurocentric geographic and linguistic traditions imbues such knowledge with real value. Simultaneously the original compilers and owners of such knowledge are devalued and diminished. Most tellingly I think, the general notes to studying the text, its paratextual and institutional frame, specifically bring into play imperial and colonial geographies as a measure of knowledge and dominance:

Draw a map of Central Australia, marking on it the chief physical features. Read an account in a good Australian geography of this *little-known* region. What do you think will be its future? Why is it called the "Dead heart of Australia"? Write an essay under this title.
[my emphases] (195)

These notes reassert a European knowledge system even as the story itself positions Aboriginal peoples as expert in the ways of the back country: "A blackfellow from the north told me that rain was expected over the Gulf of Carpentaria country, so you might have the bad luck to see something of the kind before we reach Narrawing" (9-10). Kinship with the land, and more especially, the ability to *read* the land is not merely a marker of Aboriginal identities in colonial texts. It also constitutes a serious threat to those discursive regimes about knowledge, ownership and power that underpin a metanarrative of national growth. For, if Aboriginal peoples have a greater knowledge of the land, as, in these stories, they clearly do, and if this knowledge is legitimised and valued, then a claim to that land is simultaneously legitimised. In Sayce's story, as in the Reader notes, there is a concerted attempt to close down those spaces for resistance created by the narrative's endorsement of Aboriginal knowledges. Thus the story and its paratextual frame (the notes that direct reader reception) reassert colonising discourses via those cultural codes that demonstrate a superior, civilised people;

mapping and maps, a written language, educational books and systems (in recognisably European senses). Meanwhile, the knowledgeable Aboriginal person must be caricatured, so that, commensurately, any understandings he or she demonstrates are devalued, products of a primitive familiarity as opposed to a scientific project of discovery, observation and documentation. And so it is that Dick, the hero of Sayce's adventure story, explains his European observations and knowledge of the country to his companions, first paying particular attention to the linguistic functions of the Australian outback: "Dick explained that in Central Australia the word 'creek' is applied to any bed where water would flow if it ever rained hard enough" (9). Dick then goes on to illustrate how well he knows this place, its dormant life concealed beneath a "hungry-looking" country: "You'd be amazed at its fertility [...] Say we had a good solid thunderstorm here to-day. In a week you'd see a carpet of green all over the plain. The seeds are there all right; they're just waiting for a chance to germinate" (9). (Interestingly Dick here points to the superficiality of topographical knowledge. One must look beneath the surface to really understand this landscape.)

Despite Dick's enthusiasm for his subject, it is actually Larry, an Aboriginal man, who delivers a flood warning to the white men. What is equally telling, however, is the anxiety that underlies Larry's approach; where he is positioned as an interloper, an intruder on the white man's camp. Having "stole[n]" up to the fire, suggesting his secretiveness, even cunning, Larry stands, "respectfully waiting till the white men should tell him he could deliver his message" (10). Highlighting his status as master, Dick is the first to address the man. In doing so, he adopts a use of the English language that acts as signifier of Aboriginal inferiority: "You, Larry? [...] You come longa Dundoonda, eh?" (10). Like the black trackers in "Lost in the Bush", the Aboriginal visitor is represented as child-like, emphasising his lesser status in terms of the narrative's hierarchy of race; "The man grinned like a child, pleased at being recognised by a white man" (10). His happiness at an implicit valuing accorded him by the white man re-presents unequal race relations. The Aboriginal man's pleasure at being recognised suggests his "natural" inferiority. It

is clear that he not only accepts his position as a lesser man, but more powerfully, that he is also grateful for, and deferential to, a European presence. Yet, even as he is positioned thus, Larry is actually central to the narrative's impending climax. He warns the white men: "Big mob water come down longa Dry Creek" (10). When Dick hears this news he turns to his companion to explain its ramifications. In doing so, he reasserts a native-like knowingness about the Australian heartland: "It's just what I feared [...] Dry Creek is only a few miles ahead, and it lies across our track to Narrawing" (10). And when he goes on to address the native, who in fact has just demonstrated a superior knowledge of natural events, he patronizingly adopts pidgin English. "You good fella [...] Me give you plenty tucker" (10). Apparently well-fed, the Aboriginal man is neatly removed from the story since his presence could further problematise the narrative's premise, that Dick is master of the kind of bush knowledge that will ensure his triumph over the floodwaters.

Finally, another kind of adventure, loosely structured around the "lost tribe" sub-genre, again posits conceptions of Aboriginal and European knowledge as integral to articulations of authenticity and legitimacy. This story, an excerpt from Henry Kingsley's *Geoffry Hamlyn*, appears in *Queensland School Readers Book VI* as "The Australian Alps" and as "An Encounter with the Blacks" in *Western Australian Reader Book IV*.⁹ This story retells a popular and titillating narrative, the white man gone native. Such stories appealed to those readers safely home in Britain because of their subversive, exciting nature. In the colonies, however, such stories rehearsed anxieties about race and miscegenation. More particularly, these narratives enact the highly ambivalent Australian settler experience, the desire to know the land as an indigene (therefore securing a claim to that land), while simultaneously making a claim of otherness from the indigene. In this particular version of the well-worn narrative, an Englishman John Sampson is introduced with some emphasis on his education: he attended "one of the great English universities, and was a good scholar" (*Queensland Reader* 56). The point about Sampson's education is to position him as a civilised gentleman. Not only is he a member of the superior British race, but he is equally a man of superior knowledge. Yet, Sampson is somehow tainted.

He is forced to leave the university and England “for some great irregularity”, and in this way, his appearance in the colonies is explained (56).

In colonial Australia, Sampson has a share in his brother-in-law’s station and it is to this property he absconds when he learns he is wanted by police for horse-stealing. The troopers discover him, and he only barely manages a miraculous escape up a cliff and into the ranges. He disappears for four years and, importantly for readings of race and overt imperialist colonialism, while Sampson is not known to white men he is thought dead. (Naturally enough it would seem, given that only white knowledge is privileged here.) Eventually, when Sampson does return, he carries the signs of Aboriginality: “He came back to them, dressed in opossum skins, with scarce a vestige of European clothing about him. His beard had grown down over his chest, and he had nearly forgotten his mother tongue, but, when speech came to him again, he told them a strange story” (57). Most importantly, it is Sampson’s own forgetfulness, the near loss of his mother tongue, which is the most horrifying aspect of his experience for his listeners and, by extension, for readers. Along with the English language standing in for civilisation, the fears expressed here are equally symptomatic of repressed guilt about the destruction of Aboriginal languages. As a generic precursor, this story also recalls the anxieties embodied in the figure of Gemmy Fairley in David Malouf’s *Remembering Babylon*, a novel I will consider later in this chapter. The uncertainty of Gemmy’s identity is recognisable in his speech act, “I am a British object”. In Kingsley’s story, the English language is also responsible for Sampson’s redemption. First though, to return to Kingsley’s narrative:

Having crossed into the mountains, Sampson reaches country untrodden by white men. Therefore, as far as he is concerned, it is unknown country, and “for the mere sake of adventure”, he goes on into the mountains. This evocation of an “untrodden”, “unknown” country employs the same tropes of emptiness and discovery as they are enacted in Australian exploration narratives. Eventually, Sampson comes across “a small tribe of friendly blacks” (60). In portraying these

people as superstitious and primitive; they “supposed him to be one of their own tribe, dead long ago, who had come back to them, renovated and beautified, from the other world” (60). Further devaluing a non-European world-view, Sampson leads what is described as a “pleasant slothful life” while living deep in the heart of the ranges. His European belongings are displaced by his tribal life; his gun rusts, his horse dies and his clothes are nearly all replaced by animal skins. Indeed, he is entirely resigned to his new life: “He had forgotten his own tongue, and had given up all thoughts of crossing again the desolate barriers of snow which divided him from civilisation” (60). When, eventually, the rediscovery of a letter from his sister encourages him to attempt a return to civilisation, language again plays a significant role in the construction of this narrative and its ideological effects. Most profoundly, however, reading the letter is like being roused “from sleep”. Disturbingly then, Aboriginal peoples, their cultural beliefs and practices, are all quarantined within the confines of a sleep-like state, a static and arrested stage of development. Reiterating the discursive effects of the text, the Reader notes that accompany the extract have this to say about snow sleepiness: “Benighted travellers lying lost in the snow become gradually numbed and drowsy, and soon are sleeping the sleep of death” (61). In other words, Aboriginal peoples are again constructed as a dying race as they are overtaken by the advancements of a suffocating white civilisation (for which the snow drift acts as metaphor).

Speaking on behalf of Aboriginal peoples

As I argued at the outset of this chapter, a particular effect of the colonial texts reproduced in the Readers is an effective silencing, or absence, of individual Aboriginal voices. This silencing operates in a number of ways. Aboriginal peoples are usually represented as a homogenous group locked into a particular evolutionary stage where “Aboriginal people are located at the lowest stage of existence, debarred from movement towards the lofty heights of white civilisation” (Bradford *Reading Race* 24-5). Of those who are permitted identities, these identities are simultaneously undermined as barbaric, inauthentic; even pathetic. Aboriginal characters are often nameless and voiceless, and when they are permitted to speak,

their speech is mediated, written and reproduced by white voices via teachers, writers and the English language of the Readers. Not surprisingly then, Aboriginal writers are entirely absent from these anthologised collections of “classic”, “relevant” literature for Australian school children. Anthropological texts objectify Aboriginal peoples not only as “other”, but also as absent. Therefore, these peoples can be both spoken for and written about.

The Tasmanian and Victorian Readers offer up an interesting comparison in terms of the importance of constructions of Aboriginality in relation to regional identities. The extinction of Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples is presented as historical fact at the time of the Readers’ publication. Subsequently, absence is a particularly powerful topos in informing the anthropological texts produced in the Tasmanian reading series. In a contradictory way, however, Tasmania also relies on traces of Aboriginality to demonstrate its selfhood, particularly its difference from Victoria (on whose Readers the Tasmanian Education Department relied heavily for content). Paradoxically then, the evidence for Aboriginal extinction is central to shaping a uniquely Tasmanian history. This is particularly evident in Dr W. J. Sollas’s “Extinct Hunters: The Tasmanians”, an abridged extract from *Ancient Hunters and their Modern Representatives*, reproduced only in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade VI*. As well as offering a uniquely Tasmanian perspective on indigenous histories in Australia, and thus defining a sense of regional identity, this essay is constructed around a familiar binary. In terms of a Derridean model of difference, the peoples of European descent in Tasmania know only what they truly are by necessarily relying upon Aboriginal peoples to demonstrate what they are not. Subsequently, this text reads almost as an inventory of Aboriginal characteristics not shared by Europeans. Clearly, Aboriginal people are primitives. Initially, their physical appearance is detailed and found inferior. “The original inhabitants of Tasmania habitually went about in a state of nakedness” (35), “a fully dressed young man wore [...] a number of kangaroos’ teeth fastened in his woolly hair” and “a more barbarous kind of decoration, produced by gashing the arm so as to give rise to cicatrices, was not uncommon” (36).

The article then moves to sites of domesticity, the foundation of any society or civilisation. Again, the original Tasmanians are placed at a lowly point on the evolutionary ladder. They are represented as without permanent residences, their nomadic lifestyle clearly inadequate in supporting a developed social structure: “The Tasmanians had no houses, nor any fixed abode; they wandered perpetually from place to place in search of food, and their only protection [...] was a rude screen made up by fixing up strips of bark against wooden stakes” (36). Moreover, the Tasmanian Aboriginals rely on a “few and simple” implements “made of wood and stone” to accommodate their meagre hunter-gatherer existence. What knowledge these Tasmanians do possess is inadequate and evidence of an inability to evolve beyond the stone-age: “Cooking by boiling [is] unknown to this *primitive* people”, the Tasmanians are “*ignorant* of the art of fishing” and fire is “obtained by the *simple* plan of rubbing the pointed end of a stick [...] in another piece of wood” [my emphases] (39-40). Significantly, however, this article inadvertently reveals the inadequacies of European voices who seek to speak on behalf of Aboriginal peoples. While at one point it is argued that “the Tasmanians are said to have been unacquainted with boats or canoes”, the article goes on to detail the particulars of a type of raft used by Aboriginal peoples in travelling to Maatsuyker and Maria Islands (40). And European voices are quoted as evidence of the raft’s existence: “An old whaler asserted that he had seen one of them go across to Witch Island, near Port Davey, in the midst of a storm” (41). Contradictions inherent in this kind of anthropological study surface again at the end of the passage where an anonymous yet informed statement is made in regards to the Northern Tasmanians and their ocean-going craft: “The natives on the north coast of Tasmania are said not to have made use of rafts” (41).

The conclusion draws on the unreliability of European observers of the Tasmanian Aboriginals to question pre-contact population estimates; “the highest is 20,000, but this is probably far in excess of the truth” (41).¹⁰ European incursion is benignly described as “the time Europeans first became acquainted with the country” and the

“excessive” estimate of the Aboriginal population nullifies the impact of the revelation that population numbers following the war of 1825 to 1831 were “scarcely 200” (41). Essentially, European settlement in Tasmania results in the “extinction” of the Tasmanian Aborigines. This is presented as not particularly surprising given an Aboriginal inability to evolve and adapt as clearly foregrounded in the preceding anthropological study. Indeed, despite gathering the “wretched survivors” into a settlement where “every effort was made for their welfare [...] the white man’s civilisation proved scarcely less fatal than the white man’s bullet” (41). The death of Truganini, “the last survivor”, in 1877, marks the passing of Aboriginal tenure in Tasmania, and thus, the Aboriginal peoples are relegated to offering isolated points of historical interest only. The final words; “the race became extinct”, suggests inevitability, but also I think, shifts responsibility so that some degree of Aboriginal agency is implied in the peoples’ own demise (41). In either sense, European people are absolved from feelings of responsibility and guilt.

“Robinson’s Adventure with the Tackines” (*The Tasmanian Reader Grade V*) re-enacts a period of Tasmania’s indigenous history as a decisive element of the state’s growth.¹¹ An introduction precedes the narrative, contextualising it in terms of Tasmanian memories and identities. It presupposes some knowledge of Aboriginal history. This is revealing in that students are expected to already understand the significance of the term the “black line”, therefore according this event status and notoriety in the state’s history: “When the costly ‘black line’ had proved so complete a failure, George Augustus Robinson [...] approached Lieutenant-Governor Arthur with an offer to conciliate and bring under control the injured and vengeful natives” (244). Robinson is thus represented as a kind of saviour for both white and black Tasmanians. His voluntary role as conciliator will subjugate the dangerous blacks and in terms of Tasmania’s unique story of absence, Robinson will rescue the blacks from their path toward inevitable extinction. In the introduction to this account of his adventure, Robinson is presented as hero-like in his “encounters” with the Tasmanian Aborigines: “He went unarmed among the wild tribes” and “underwent severe hardships and great dangers” (244). It is within this framework

that Robinson's "adventure" unfolds, and there are overlapping parallels between this story and other colonial adventure tales. Indeed, it is Robinson's own construction of himself that promulgates such a heroic image: "The following is from Robinson's own account of the occurrences, as set out in his report dated 14th September, 1832, to Mr John Burnett, the Colonial Secretary of the Colony" (244).

Though the dislocation and debasement of its Aboriginal peoples is not overtly framed as a shameful aspect of Tasmania's history, it is nevertheless a dark chapter in the region's narrative of self. Hence "Robinson's Adventure with the Tackines" unfolds in the very heart of the wild, Gothic-like Tasmanian landscape. The Tackines inhabit what is possibly Tasmania's most remote wilderness, even in contemporary times, that mystifying space between the Arthur and the Pieman Rivers on the west coast. In a reflection of the wilderness that they inhabit, the indigenous Tasmanians are repeatedly referred to as "wild natives", figures of another nightmarish landscape (the uncanny of the Gothic and the settler imaginary). As Robinson watches, the "hostile" Aboriginal people make a large fire and, barbarian-like, they assemble around it to prepare their weapons. The people produced by this landscape are bloodthirsty and vengeful: "The wild natives had assembled on the opposite bank of the river. Here they continued to exhibit the most violent gestures, and were exceedingly boisterous in their declamations, threatening to cross the river and massacre us" (246). The wildness of these peoples serves to underscore the gravity of Robinson's situation while simultaneously hinting at the psychic unsettling of Tasmania's repressed memories.

In line with markers of colonial discourse already identified, European appropriation or ownership of Aboriginal identities is clear at the outset when Robinson refers to his companions as "my natives". There is a double meaning, however, in this declaration of ownership. These meanings underlie what is emphasised in the physicality of the Aboriginal peoples. Upon seeing the Tackines, for example, Robinson describes them as "a body of wild aborigines" (244). While Aboriginal physicality (as opposed to a refined European body), speaks of

primitive, racial inferiority, it also suggests something more. Here, a slippage of terms reflects how the orientalist gaze, Aboriginalism, is focussed on black bodies and their surfaces. This articulation of white desire for the black body reveals an unstable zone between self and other, a zone occasionally revealed in similarly unstable metanarrative signs (for example, when Jane Duff is handed up to Dicky, and when Alec carries his native guide Murri out of a bushfire in a homo-erotic gesture: "Alec seized the black round his slim body, and, by a great effort, lifted him from the ground"). Robinson, however, appears mainly concerned with depicting a hostile and wild people who will, in turn, demonstrate "the extreme danger" of his situation (244). Robinson is careful to infuse his narrative with the drama and suspense expected of a heroic quest, a true adventure story. The following morning confirms the wild natives' "savage purpose" as they prepare the weapons intended for his death (245). As further evidence of this incomparable threat, "Robinson's aborigines" flee the scene as the wild natives advance (245).

Robinson too runs for his life. Yet this is not a cowardly act. He is outnumbered and alone, and only his wits will save him. Recognising a river crossing as his single hope for escape, Robinson braves the current despite his inability to swim. As is so often the case in colonial texts, Robinson is still reliant on his Aboriginal friends in surviving the hostile natural environment. Indeed, he reaches the other side of the river with the aid of a woman, one of the friendly natives, who is also escaping. Given Robinson's sudden disappearance he is perceived to be something extraordinary by the wild Aborigines. His account of the phenomenon draws attention to the inferior Aboriginal intelligence and a deficiency in both reasoning and logic: "The effect produced on their credulous minds led them to believe that I was influenced by more than an ordinary spirit" (247). Perhaps it is this weakness in the Aboriginal race that enables Robinson to so quickly "forgive them the attack they had made upon my life" (247). The continuing narrative provides evidence of Robinson's success due to his "understanding" of Aboriginal peoples and his particular brand of muscular Christianity: "The forbearance I displayed, and the desire I evinced to benefit them and save their lives, induced two other adults to

follow the example of their friends" (247). Contrary to even his own expectations then, Robinson's band of followers increases. Similar to Robinson's earlier referral to "his" Aborigines, these Aboriginal people are again posited as belongings or possessions: "I had now gained an accession of aborigines" (247). Significantly though, Robinson's promises are revealed as duplicitous when he places "the strangers in security at the depot on the Hunter Islands" (247).

Anthropological and other texts that represent the disappearance of Aboriginal peoples are prevalent in school Readers. In *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book* "The Old Inhabitants", "The Last of His Tribe" and "From a Western Hill-Top" are all constructed in terms of absence and memory.¹² In *Fear and Temptation*, Goldie identifies a particular genre that he terms the "lost tribe novel". Though the texts under examination here are not novels, the significance Goldie attributes to the form is equally relevant to poems and stories published in the Readers. Goldie notes that "the search for the elevated indigene" can be read "as a quest for an idealized figure superior to the qualities perceived to be the norm of the existing indigenes" (33). Through his readings of lost tribe novels, Goldie argues that within these texts, the discovery of a superior indigenous "tribe" provides an encounter that supplies both a positive definition of country as well as providing indigenisation to the white explorer (33). While the texts in the Readers are not concerned so much with locating tribes literally lost in the far reaches of the country, they do work to promote an idea of real and authentic Aboriginal peoples lost to a contemporary Australian nation. Their absence implies a superior European presence and a replacement white Australian indigeneity. More recently, Alan Lawson takes up Homi Bhabha's notion of mimicry (almost the same, but not quite), to theorise this logic of effacement, "a necessary and unavoidable part of the repertoire of the settler" (1215): "In reacting to that [...] incompleteness, that sign of something less, the settler mimics, appropriates, and desires (while simultaneously *seeking to efface*) the authority of the indigene [my emphasis] (1215).

Henry Kendall's "The Last of His Tribe", in *The Victorian Reading Books Eighth-Book*, *The Adelaide Readers Book III* and the *Western Australia Reader Book IV*, is evidence of a continuing coding of endangered and extinct Aboriginality, especially when read alongside "The Slave's Dream" and depictions of King Richard, or "Dicky", in "Lost in the Bush".¹³ Symbol or referent for Aboriginal extinction, Kendall's last Aboriginal cannot face "the loss and the loneliness", burying his face on his knees and in his hair (11). Dreams provide his only hope, an escape into the glories of the past, where true Aboriginality is located: "And he dreams of the hunts of yore,/ And of foes that he sought, and of fights that he fought/ With those who will battle no more – " (12). Indeed, death and extinction are clearly welcome. Life is meaningless, empty as it is of what the orientalist gaze attributes to real and authentic Aboriginal culture, the hunts, fights, corroborees, the tribe. "The Slave's Dream", written by American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, in *The Victorian Readers Sixth Book*, offers an interesting comparison with the portrait created in Kendall's poem. While not an Australian text, "The Slave's Dream", similarly focuses on a displaced, lonely man as he dreams of his native country:

Wide through the landscape of his dreams
The lordly Niger flowed;
Beneath the palm-trees on the plain
Once more a king he strode. (124)

Evocative images of his life as a slave reveal his degradation, the distance between his present state and his cultural heritage. With his hand around a sickle, he is laid out beside ungathered rice, "his matted hair [...] buried in the sand". Like Dicky in "Lost in the Bush" and Kendall's equally tragic Aborigine, a sense of his power has been relegated to the past and in a more literal sense, white men now own his identity. The Reader's notes to this text point to an important difference in the way in which the "native" African is constructed in comparison to indigenous Australians. This delineation enables the Readers to position the sympathetic portrayal of the African man's experience as entirely removed from the experiences of Aboriginal peoples. The question "what is slavery?" and the directive "mention some people that tried to abolish slavery" allow an important ideological point to be

made. There is some differentiation, even as it remains unclear why, between a man stolen from his homeland and his subsequent ruination as a slave compared with the fate of colonised peoples subjected to the law of the colonisers and the ramifications of dying or living in a stolen landscape.

The passing of the Aboriginal peoples is a persistent coding in a metanarrative of national growth. "Before the White Men Came", in the second Adelaide Reader, records the absence of indigenous populations alongside the presence of non-indigenous populations in South Australia. Significantly, in this text, Aboriginal *ownership* is contradictorily acknowledged, making explicit the white colonial usurpation of the land: "Before the year 1836, when the white man first came to live in South Australia, the black-fellows *owned* all the land. They lived in tribes of about 200 to 500 people, and each tribe had a king" [my emphasis] (83). Yet, in a typical example of the Readers' production of a naturalised white superiority, the natives are "too lazy" to make dams or tanks in which to store water and the itinerant nature of Aboriginal peoples is problematic for an Australian preoccupation with place and identity (84). While "white men generally settle down in some town or district [...] the blacks, who were a wandering people, made their camps whenever game was plentiful, and moved on when food became scarce" (84). The evolutionary stagnation of Aboriginal peoples, their inability to evolve beyond their tribal culture, is offered as evidence for their eventual demise, and indeed, to justify European usurpation of South Australia: "After a time they tried to live like the white people, but they were not used to our food and clothing, nor to our habits. The change in their way of living was too great for them, and they soon began to die out" (85-6). Though Aboriginal families remain on the mission stations in the outback country, the article differentiates between this landscape and "the settled parts of our state" where "scarcely any remain" (86). The Aboriginal peoples then, belong to the wild and uncivilised landscape that exists only in the state's interior. In support of this inevitable passing of the Aboriginal peoples, the author recalls his youth, when "thousands lived on the banks of the Murray" and "many made their homes near the clear cool water of the Blue Lake" (86). Recalling Henry Kendall's

poem "The Last of His Tribe" in the Victorian Readers, "Before the White Man Came" closes with poignant images of a grey haired old man "Lanky", the "last of this large Mount Gambier tribe" sitting on the low cliffs near Beachport, with his elbows on his knees and his head resting on his hands as he watched the sun setting across the sea (86).

"Well, 'Lanky,'" said I, "what are you thinking of as the sun goes down?" "Ah!" he replied, "I am the last of my tribe. All the rest have gone – strong men and lubras and little piccaninnies, and soon I, too, shall follow, over there where the sun is going down."

The semi-anthropological "From a Western Hill-Top", in *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*, reproduced as "A Tribal Gathering" in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade IV* and in *The Adelaide Readers Book IV*, similarly represents Aboriginal culture as a historical curiosity. In the more extensive text in the Victorian Reader the typical romanticisation of pioneer life produces a reverie upon the absence of the Aboriginal peoples. "For a time the whites lived on sufferance among the blacks; by and by the position was reversed. When the white men came here, the aborigines wandered over these wide plains in thousands. Where are they to-day?" (16). While whites are revealed as interconnected with the Aboriginal peoples' disappearance, it is as though the Aborigines have chosen to depart. The question "where are they to-day?" suggests something of a mystery about their absence. It implies that "they", despite being initially present in their thousands, were not strong enough to withstand the inevitable, their replacement by white people. White Australian contribution to the death and disappearance of Aboriginal peoples is also denied in Mary Gilmore's "The Lost Tribes" (in *The Victorian Readers Fourth Book*).¹⁴ A single verse, epigraph-like, appears at the end of a European retelling of a traditional Aboriginal "myth" or "legend", W. E. Thomas' "Why The Crow is Black". There are two levels to the significance of the poem's inclusion. One aspect is the way in which it is physically positioned on the page, providing an important connection to the story that precedes it. As Aboriginal peoples are positioned overtly as "lost tribes" in the title of the poem, it follows that white Australian appropriation of Aboriginality (as evidenced by the recording and production of the story it follows)

is part of a worthy, even benevolent, project to preserve something of indigenous culture. The verse itself strengthens the connection between the two texts. It more clearly articulates the meaning implied by the printed appearance of the texts (where they can be read in conjunction with each other). "Never again from the night, the/ night that has taken,/ Shall ever the tribes return/ to tell us their tale" (25). Australia's indigenous peoples have been swallowed up by the night, part of the natural world, the so-called "Dreaming" that produced them in the first place. In the protective space of this night, where the tribes "lie in a sleep, whence none shall ever awaken", the tribes are rendered speechless. They are unable to return "to tell us their tale", providing the justification necessary for European voices to speak on behalf of the disappearing indigenous culture, to adopt the stories as part of their own cultural history.

In "From a Western Hill-Top", author Donald McDonald not only speaks on behalf of Aboriginal peoples, his imagining literally recreates their cultural practices and traditions: "Could we have occupied this flint seat on the mountaintop a century ago, we might have witnessed one of those great tribal gatherings held at times on the plain below. Let us imagine that to-day we are looking through that long avenue of years as well as from the mountain" (17). McDonald is assured in his invocation of this past, describing the "wild spectacle before us" in detail. Smoke, signal fires and message sticks summon the tribes to a corroboree where the chiefs' faces are marked with red clay and their hair adorned with white kangaroo teeth. The otherworldliness and mysteriousness associated with Aboriginalism and Aboriginality is emphasised: "As they move from the shadows into the light, it seems as though they were so many human skeletons upon the plain" (18). As cultural spectators, the European fascination with the exotic otherness of Aboriginality is deeply eroticised:

Then the sonorous ring of the music-sticks is heard through the clear air, and the corroboree begins. A dancer rushes from the outer darkness into the circle of firelight, and stands for an instant as if petrified. Every muscle and every limb vibrate; and, as the swish of

the leaves and emu feathers and the rattle of the kangaroo teeth reach a climax, the dancer falls back into the gloom. (18)

As Kobena Mercer argues, the orientalist (or in this case Aboriginalist) gaze “is fundamentally predicated on a certain male narcissism [...] a classical *mise-en-scene* of sexual fantasy in which [black men] are reduced to mirror images of what [white men] want-to-see” (qtd in Dixon 75). Yet even as the Aboriginal body is desired and theatrically objectified within a spotlight created by the “circle of firelight”, the boundary between whiteness and its other must be reasserted and the dancer is returned to the gloom, the marginalised edges of the text. Having already predicated the emergence of the repressed, however, the story as sign disturbs a metanarrative trajectory in which there exists a clear differentiation between self and other (and where racial stereotypes police these boundaries).

“The old inhabitants” by C. E. W. Bean, also in the *Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*, exemplifies more explicitly the binarist basis for white racial superiority. Examining some stones, powerfully nameless and voiceless referents for absent Aborigines, Bean relegates Aboriginal peoples to a dim, dark past before the beginning of Australian history. This beginning is marked by the arrival of more enlightened Europeans. “Those stones spoke of an age before the dawn of history ... Some one in the blank, utter darkness before Australian history began, some human being belonging to a time of which no history will ever be written ... must have knelt there and polished those flat stones” (8). Significantly, Aboriginal voices are so effectively silenced that in this narrative, even stones are allowed to speak for them. More ironically, and again pointing to ambivalence and contradiction in a school Reader metanarrative, Bean, the history-maker himself, here writes of those peoples and that time he considers to be unlikely historical subjects (8). The stones, Bean argues, are poor remains compared to the ruins of other nations that stand as “revered landmarks” (9). Yet, for Bean, these remains adequately define the Australian Aborigines, as evidence of a “primitive” race of the “Stone Age” (9). In an important coding of Aboriginality in the Readers, images of death and decay are intertwined with Bean’s evocation of the “Mulga blacks”: “Occasionally a sandhill

blows bare, and then people come upon white bones and skulls lying where men and women lived" (9).

The evocation of Aboriginal absence prevalent throughout the Readers can also be read in Bean's conclusion. "Whether the blacks could have developed much further without communication with the rest of the world is rather hard to decide" (11). Bean attests that without a domesticated animal, Aboriginal peoples are unlikely to have reached a pastoral stage. European invasion then is not responsible for Aboriginal displacement. The Aboriginal peoples are evolutionarily retarded and thus, doomed to extinction. Indeed, for Bean, European incursion can be read as something of a necessary step in Aboriginal development.

Desire, Aboriginal myths and the 'dreaming'

While Australian Aboriginal peoples are constructed as inferior in the settler stories published in the Readers, there is a simultaneous and concerted desire to claim the ancient culture in an attempt to disown or at least to deny a persistent sense of Australia's supposedly marginal relationship to the European centre, what Bhaba terms "the repetitious slippage of difference and desire" (131). A particularly Australian "settler" cultural heritage, known variously as a "cultural cringe" or "provincial problem", saw the nation's identity formed in relation to "an externally imposed hierarchy of cultural values" (Smith "The Provincialism Problem" 1). In this sense, the nation looked back to what was perceived as a superior cultural experience (read Europe) to assess its own status as both a producer of, and participant in, local and international arts practices and movements. Most importantly in terms of such assessments, Australia was often found wanting. Again drawing on Bhaba's sense of mimicry, Australian culture is "almost the same [as], but not quite" the authentic imperial culture (130). In this way, appropriating the "otherness" of Aboriginality and its concomitant status as exotic, ancient and "mystical" went some way toward addressing Australia's "problem" with its own shifting, transitory and evolving sense of self.

In the Victorian Readers, an appropriation of Aboriginality works primarily at the level of “dreamtime” stories or Aboriginal mythology. Particularly in middle school texts, stories of authentic Australian landscapes, flora and fauna are written in and written over by Europeanised versions of Aboriginal oral texts. From a white Australian perspective, the perceived power and mysteriousness of Aboriginal dreamtime stories and creation myths is evidence of the connection between Australian indigenous peoples and the land. More than merely addressing a provincial problem then, white appropriation of these stories and myths also effectively appropriates the link between Aboriginal peoples and the land. When the maturing national imagination adopts the “dreaming”, it effectively adopts the landscape, producing in itself a positive apperception of its own indigenous identity. Appropriating so much by invoking the very reductive categorisation the “dreaming” or the “dreamtime” is deeply problematic in other ways too. As Hodge and Mishra point out, the one term, the “dreaming” is used to refer to the *whole* of traditional Aboriginal culture, while the many Aboriginal words that have been translated as “the dreaming” do not usually have any semantic connection to “dreams” or “dreaming” (28). This is important because, firstly, encompassing many complex traditions of beliefs and texts within the limits of one term makes these same traditions reducible and “simple”. The inadequate and misleading nature of the term “the dreaming” is reinforced in what Hodge and Mishra have perceptively noted about its semantics: “The unusual syntax of the word (combining a definite article with a gerund, with no agent presumed to be doing the dreaming, and no object that is being dreamt) is a product of the grammar of English, a grammar deformed by certain English speakers for their own purposes to create a specific form of discourse which renounces the standard language and the dominant rationality” (28). In this way, Aboriginal peoples’ cultural beliefs and practices are made similarly irrational and ungrounded.

There are no less than four European productions of Aboriginal texts reproduced in *The Victorian Readers Fourth Book*. Two of the stories are taken from Kate Langloh Parker’s collection of Aboriginal oral texts.¹⁵ “How the Sun Was Made” is from

Australian Legendary Tales while “How Mussels Were Brought to the Creeks” is from *More Australian Legendary Tales*.¹⁶ The biographical information about Parker included as part of the Reader’s notes and exercises section reveals her authority as a narrator of Aboriginal textual traditions: “Mrs. K. Langloh Parker passed many years on a station in the Murrumbidgee region of New South Wales” (160). As a European spectator, a long-time observer of Aboriginality, Parker is therefore able to write on behalf of the people she observes: “She was interested in the folk stories told by the older blacks in the neighbourhood, and wrote them down” (160). Bradford astutely observes that Parker’s collection, in leaving out information about the region in which the clan live, the authors or owners of the stories, the dynamics of their telling and so on, serves to make the stories appear as “disembodied and displaced fragments, melancholy reminders of the shadowy children to whom they were told” (“Textuality and Colonization” 103). In this sense, Parker’s appropriation of the stories appears justified because they are of little value, mere disconnected fragments. Contradictorily, however, the notes themselves draw attention to the true “value” of Parker’s collections. Parker’s first book, “illustrated with the pen-and-ink drawings of an Aboriginal artist”, suggesting Aboriginal collaboration in its production, “*succeeded so well* that she wrote another book” [my emphasis] (160).¹⁷

Parker’s stories open in the European tradition of folk tales or legends, placing the stories in a time in the long distant past, “before there were men on the earth (“The Sun” 126). And as recorder of a dying people, Parker is careful to infuse the stories with some sense of the Aboriginal voices who tell them, using Aboriginal words (though initially with their English translations), in her versions of the narratives. Thus, in “How Mussels Were Brought to the Creeks”, the seagull is named the warraywurraymul and the crow is wahn. Parker’s use of English language also reflects a concern with archiving Aboriginal voices: “They do not belong to your country. They live in one far away which I passed in my flight from the big salt water [...] And she struggled to free herself, crying the strange, sad cry of her tribe” (“The Mussels” 14). As a European narrator, however, Parker also constructs herself

as superior to the people whose stories she tells. The conclusion to the story of the mussels demonstrates an anthropological interest in the Aboriginal peoples.

The blacks cook mussels in the hot ashes of their fires, and eat them with relish, saying, "If it had not been for Wahn, we should not have had this good food, for he it was who caused it to be given to us by the wurraywurraymul, the mussel-bringer." (17)

"The Magpie and the Children" written by Mrs J. T. Gilmour Wallace, simply identified as a "Melbourne writer", is explicitly represented as simplistic and similarly fanciful: "The story is a myth told by the blacks to the piccaninnies" (172). There is no information as to the story's origin nor how, in fact, Mrs Wallace is familiar with the narrative. In line with European narrative traditions of the fairytale, rather, the story begins thus: "Once upon a time, the magpie was a wicked old woman. She became changed into a bird for her ill deeds, as you shall hear" (119). There are a number of discordant notes struck during the course of this third person narration. And, as the narrative progresses, the storyline itself is reminiscent of well-known European fairytales where children are lured into danger by the promise of food. In this story, the old woman tricks the children's mothers into searching for honey and yams, promising she will look after the children. She takes the children "to her mia-mia where she fed them on hot cake with plenty of honey on it" (120). Then, with the offer of toys, she takes them into a hollow tree where she "shut[s] the door tight". The hybridisation of Aboriginal and European elements in this story suggest it has significances beyond a mere folk tale supposedly told by older Aboriginal people to their children.

Indeed, when the children begin crying, their parents begin a frantic search, "but nothing was to be found of the lost children" (121). Lost children narratives, as explored earlier, especially in relation to the literary production of children and childhood, operate as important signs and codings within a metanarrative of national growth. This particular story, in which the Aboriginal children's parents are powerless to recover their children, raises a more disturbing aspect in its telling, particularly when read in relation to traumatic stories of the "stolen generations",

Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their homes and families as part of white Australia assimilation programs.¹⁸ In this particular narrative, the children are eventually discovered by a kind old goanna who “knew all the secrets of the bush” (122). The goanna, an indigenous Australian with an intimate knowledge of the bush, structurally resembles the black tracker who regularly appears in European stories of their own lost children. Unsurprisingly then, the goanna is the only one able to restore the children to their families. Now free, the children run home to their mothers. The European-like moral of the tale is overt: “You may be sure their mothers never again left them in the care of a stranger, no matter how pleasing that stranger might be” (122). This moral can be read as a condemnation of Aboriginal parenting practices, culturally removed from white attitudes to the proper care and education of children. More potently, however, the moral can again be read in relation to stories of the stolen generation, particularly considering its contradictory nature, given that Europeans, and not Aboriginal mothers, were responsible for creating generations of displaced Aboriginal people. The last sentence of the story, however, is again linked with white cultural memories, a return to the lost child/lost innocence symbolism of national anxieties: “Some of the blacks fancy that the echoes of the wailing of the lost child may still be heard among the gum-trees, in the depths of the bush” (123).

“Why the crow is black”, like the Kate Langloh Parker stories, is from a collection of Aboriginal texts, W. E. Thomas’s *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aborigines*. Though Thomas is a Melbourne writer, some idea of his authority is provided in the biographical notes: Thomas “collected stories about the blacks” [my emphasis] (161). The notes to the text itself are representative of the Readers’ broader constructions of Aboriginality, specifically that the appropriation of indigenous people’s cultural practices is justifiable. Most overtly, this is simply due to the status of Aboriginal people as “savages”: “It was and is the custom with many *savage* tribes to call the tribe after a certain animal or class of animals” [my emphasis] (161). More importantly though, the notes reveal an Australian fascination with the

practices and beliefs of ancient cultures, cultures that can claim *identities*, as well as long histories: "The animal is the *totem* of the tribe, and is held sacred" (161).

"Why The Crow is Black" locates the site of authentic Aboriginal dreaming in what is necessarily the distant past: "Ages ago, many of the beautiful birds and timid animals now living in the bush were men" (22). A more disturbing reading is also evinced by this introduction. Not only does it historicise a dream "time", temporally and culturally removed from present-day Aboriginal peoples; it also points to an historical process of eradicating an Aboriginal presence within and upon the landscape. In a more contemporary Australia, the bush and natural spaces once lived in, and managed by Aboriginal peoples, are largely transformed. Boundaries delineate farming lands, "home" to introduced species of birds and animals, the bush is protected within national parks (also plagued by "feral" animals and weeds), and the built environment of urban, regional and rural communities rewrites the nation's cultural history. White Australians are predominantly owners and managers of this changed landscape. "Why The Crow is Black" inadvertently draws attention to European usurpation of Aboriginal peoples and the Australian environment. It tells a story of a crow and a hawk out hunting in the bush while simultaneously drawing attention to the narrative as one situated in the landscape of "ages ago".

The narrative itself (it is mainly concerned with the crow's cunning and duplicitousness) feeds into a popular European mythology about Aboriginal peoples' primitive nature, their arrested evolutionary status as mere hunter-gatherers. The cleverness of the crow, his quick eye, ability to move soundlessly and his prowess with a spear identify him as the kind of "real" native both feared and admired among the European population. This tension is highlighted in the text as the narrative lingers on the dangers concealed within the Australian landscape. The crow hides among tall green reeds at the edge of the lagoon where he watches ducks swimming by "with their feathers glistening in the sun" (22). Having constructed a sort of snorkel from a piece of hollow reed, the crow "sank down

under the water” and “stayed perfectly still” (23). He is effectively part of his surrounds - only a “piece of dry reed through which the crow was breathing could be seen just above the surface of the water” (23). When the ducks swim above his head, the hunter demonstrates his cunning: “Without making a sound, he seized one by the leg, pulled it under the water, killed it, and put it in the net bag” (23). The crow is so successful he fills his bag and goes on to spear fish in a river before returning to camp where he cooks and eats what he can of the ducks and fish before hiding the rest. In doing so, he breaks an agreement with the hawk to share equally any game he had caught during the day. The hawk is angry and rolls the crow in the ashes of the fire. “When the crow recovered from the fight, he found he could not wash the ashes off, and, since that time the crows have always been black” (25). In terms of this narrative’s layered or potential meanings, it is important to note its appropriation by a European writer, particularly in terms of the narrative’s emphasis on the crow’s treacherous nature (where his deceitfulness means that he is literally marked by blackness).¹⁹

The new native – constructions of white indigeneity

In another strategy of appropriation, equally informed by the denial of Aboriginal peoples and the desire for a similar claim of Aboriginal “belonging”, constructions of white indigeneity portray European descendants as the new Australian natives. Central to this process is the perception or image of the Aboriginal person as the land, where such an image provides fertile ground for the cultivation of European indigenisation (Goldie 40). Literary representations in the school Readers allow the image of the Aboriginal person to be contained and controlled largely within this semiotic framework (where land = Aboriginal). The Aboriginal as symbol is carefully constructed so that in essence, the symbol can be more easily appropriated. More recently, Lawson takes up this point. Lawson rightly argues that the settler subject “mimics, appropriates and desires (while seeking to efface) the authority of the indigene” in seeking to claim a native authenticity (1215). In this sense, mimicry exists as both “resemblance and menace” (Bhabha 86). The “typical” settler narrative then, that of which a Reader metanarrative is so striking an example, “has

a doubled objective: the suppression or effacement of the indigene, and the concomitant indigenisation of the settler" (Lawson 1215).

One of the most striking allegories of Australian Aboriginal displacement and white European usurpation appears in "The Old Red Gum and The Young Oak" in *The Adelaide Readers Book II*. Here an ancient eucalypt and "a young English oak" stand alongside each other, near a beautiful, deep lagoon (98). Where the trees literally stand for those peoples each represents, much is made of the gum-tree's age and images of its decline: "The old gum-tree has many a dry and dead branch; and the few leaves that still remain on it hang straight down, and cast but a thin shade. When the wind comes sweeping over the plain, its branches rub together, and groan and creak" (99). When the young oak requests the story of the gum's life, there is more at stake than recollections of times past. The storytelling enacts a process in which indigenous Australian stories are recorded and deployed as part of European discursive strategies of power and authority. At another level, the storytelling reveals national anxieties about a deep past. For indeed, the young oak looks to the gum to understand the history of the place in which it lives. Moreover, the gum actually protects the oak during the cold winter when the deciduous tree sheds its leaves. In this way, "The Old Red Gum and The Young Oak" plays out the contradictoriness of stories of national growth, where Aboriginal peoples are equally celebrated and denied, both present and absent. The red gum, a remnant of pre-colonial times, remembers the arrival of European settlers as both traumatic and destructive: "I have seen the great trees cut down, and their stumps rooted up, and the ground where they stood turned over with the *cruel* plough" [my emphasis] (100). The cruelty ascribed to the white settlers here presents an alternative reading of European incursion, where it is the antithesis of a Reader metanarrative of national growth. The red gum also remembers the Aboriginal peoples, and is physically marked by contact with these peoples: "Year by year, a tribe of blacks would camp for a time near me and my brothers. You see that mark on my trunk. That was made by their chief" (101). Despite sympathy with Aboriginal displacement, the narrative is marked by Eurocentric conceptions of Aboriginality.

The women are referred to as “gins”, and the men bring kangaroos or dingoes that they have speared for eating. There is also the almost mandatory corroboree reference: “Sometimes, a great number of black men, having drawn white lines on their faces and bodies, would dance in the silvery moonlight, or round their camp-fires” (102). The Aboriginal peoples grow fewer and eventually, they are replaced with “whites”. The landscape is irrevocably altered, the trees are cut down, houses are built and the native animals, kangaroos, dingoes, native bears and possums, all become fewer. Yet, the narrative does ultimately buy into a metanarrative of national growth: “Though the whites destroyed these animals, they brought others to take their places. Though they cut down the trees, so that houses might be built and crops sown, they planted others where they wanted them. You grew up from an acorn which, I have heard, the old grandmother had brought from far across the wide ocean” (103). Absence and presence are central to the narrative’s ideological significance then. The white people “replace” the absent indigenous peoples, vegetation and animals. Most traumatically, the narrative plays out the last of his tribe trope yet again. The gum admits to growing old: “I am an old tree now, and my roots are losing their firm hold. Perhaps, before next winter, men will come with axes and saws, and lay me low upon the ground. Then they will cut me up for firewood” (104). Where repressed Aboriginality appears in the form of the wizened old gum tree, the white invaders are about to cut down and burn this final reminder of their own unsettlement.

Mary Grant Bruce’s “A Lover of the Bush” from *Timothy in Bushland* provides another striking example of how white indigeneity is produced within the context of a Reader metanarrative. Published in *The Victorian Readers Sixth Book*, this story portrays a native-like communion between a European and the natural environment. Indeed, Timothy not only understands the landscape, he has become the indigenous Australian embodied in literary constructions of Australian Aboriginal peoples. Timothy’s “simple, honest heart of a little child” reproduces the child-like persona usually attributed to Aboriginal Australians in popular constructions of Aboriginality. His growth is shaped by his indigenous identity:

“And ever, throughout his life, the Bush called to him and he heard it” (34). As Timothy can be read as part of the landscape itself, he is not only aware of much “that most men do not see”, but in an allusion to Aboriginal cultural texts, he communes with a kind of spirit world: “Every stone, every tree, every rustle tells its own story” (34). More explicitly, Timothy embodies an indigenous mystique. He knows the landscape’s dreaming. “In the heat of the day, he sought the great rock in the creek, in whose cool hollows, fringed with maidenhair, he could sit and dream strange dreams that the world would never understand” (35).

Similarly, Francis Hartigan’s poem “Calling to Me” (in *The Victorian Readers Sixth Book*), draws on the power and mysteriousness of Aboriginality in its construction of white indigeneity. “Through the hush of my heart, in the spell of its dreaming,/ comes the song of a bush boy glad-hearted and free” (94). The magical, other-worldly quality of the “dreaming” produces the voice of a pure and intimately Australian landscape, a landscape personified in the bush boy’s voice. Just as the bush speaks to Timothy in Mary Grant Bruce’s story, the narrator of this poem hears the voice of his country in the material form of his younger self. “It is calling to me with a haunting insistence,/ And my feet wander off on a hoof-beaten track” (94). The narrator’s yearning for youth as represented by the bush boy is explicit. “Oh, the gold has gone grey in the heart of the rover,/ And the bush in the sunshine is calling to me” (94). More than a lyric lament for the days of youth however, this text also explores the ways in which the white Australian is made native. European traces are evident in the landscape, animals with hooves beat down a track and “tapers are lit in the humble old dwelling” (94). Yet it is the bush itself, from whence the narrator has travelled, to which he must return. Significantly, the journey to the bush, to the “heart” and the “dreaming”, is one necessarily aligned with Aboriginal ways:

It is calling me home – but the white road lies gleaming,
And afar from it all must I tarry and dree;
Just an echo far off, in the hush of my dreaming,
Is the voice of a youngster that’s calling to me. (94)

A simpler, yet equally important effect of a naturalised white indigeneity is the production of “native” European Australians. As noted in the first chapter analysis of Mary Fullerton’s “The Old Bush School”, the country itself produces those Australian children who attend the school of Fullerton’s reminiscences: “The gallery was full of children all grown along the creek” (*The Victorian Readers Fourth Book* 40). Hence these white Australians can only be read as indigenous. The bush children attending the school are, in an overt reference to Aboriginal peoples, “a little gang of primitives” and in a repetition of white Australia’s powerful, dream-like connection with the landscape, Fullerton produces her narrative while dreaming of her youth: “It brings back youth, and the long, long thoughts of youth, to dwell upon it all. These thoughts come stealing upon me, as the scents of the bush used to come floating in, and as the sunbeams used to fall on the western windows of that old schoolhouse so long ago” (43).

Iconic Australian poets Henry Lawson and A. B. ‘Banjo’ Paterson (so venerated for representing the true spirit of Australian identity) are also implicated in the literary promulgation of white indigeneity. In Lawson’s “The Fire at Ross’s Farm” (*The Victorian Readers Fifth Book*), the quintessentially Australian hero, the stockman, is explicitly made “native”. “The sun had set on Christmas Eve,/ When, through the scrub-lands wide, Young Robert Black came riding home/ As only natives ride” (46). Not only does the hero Robert emerge from the scrub-lands, where the country’s interiority represents an essentialist Aboriginality, he is also specifically identified as a “native”, and significantly, his name is Robert *Black*. Paterson’s “The Daylight is Dying” (*The Victorian Readers Fifth Book*), a ballad ostensibly concerned with Australia’s pioneering past, is also steeped with allusions to a white Australian dreaming. “When night doth her glories/ Of star-shine unfold,/ ‘Tis then that the stories of Bushland are told” (158). Clearly, an authentic understanding of the stories is limited to those to whom they are native, those Australians who can read national identity in the tales. “Unnumbered I hold them/ In memories bright,/ But who could unfold them/ Or read them aright?” (159). The stories of the native

bushman are intimately bound up with the Australian landscape, a landscape that is an integral part of the night-time stories (read dreaming).

Beyond all denials
The stars in their glories,
The breeze in the myalls,
Are part of their stories.
The waving of grasses,
The song of the river
That sings as it passes,
For ever and ever.

Paterson's evocation of nature's voice, the singing that brings the country into being, suggests the bushman's spirituality and therefore, his very aboriginality. The following stanza goes on to incorporate images of European settler society, hobble chains and the lowing of cattle, into the song. It is these images that provide the bushman's truths, his dreaming, with depth and meaning. Otherwise, his stories would be like "the words of a song/ that lamely would linger/ when lacking the rune,/ The voice of the singer,/ The lilt of the tune" (159). In a paradoxical way then, the poem's appropriation of Aboriginal mystique draws attention to its inferiority at the same time it posits Aboriginal cultural texts as necessary to becoming indigenous. It subtly asserts the necessity of layering Aboriginality (where Aboriginality provides the essential sense of belonging), with markers of European superiority (white Australia's status as a pastoral society).

There are other examples of a white Australian/Aboriginal hybridisation in this text, a kind of cultural cross-fertilisation that enables white people to claim their own belonging and dreaming. "These tales roughly wrought of/ The bush and its ways,/ May call back a thought of/ The wandering days" (160). Bush stories, in a way similar to Aboriginal peoples' stories about identity and country, provide the important link between the landscape and a white Australia. Though "the wandering days" is perhaps more clearly a reference to the Australian cultural institutions of the swaggie, the drover, the wallaby track, it also draws attention to the white indigene's nomadic lifestyle. Just as Aboriginal peoples know the land by

dint of their movement across, and within it, so too do European Australian arrivants. "Going native" is quite a literal process in this sense.

The Australian preoccupation with becoming native is not limited to the texts reproduced in school Readers. As recently as 1993, when David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* was published, the spectre of white indigeneity emerged as a problematic and controversial image. Malouf's narrative explores the racial tensions embodied in Gemmy Fairley, a European immigrant to Australia transformed after living among Aboriginal people for 16 years. Gemmy's indigenisation is represented as terrifyingly complete. *Remembering Babylon* is a story about becoming native at its most extreme. Indeed, when three children living on the fringes of colonial Australia first see Gemmy, they think him a black man. "A black! That was the boy's first thought. We're being raided by blacks" (2). Significantly, this novel opens with a reference to the imaginary produced in and by school Readers. Before Gemmy's arrival, the children are playing a game in which they are hunters tracking wolves in a Russian forest. "The boy had elaborated this scrap of make-believe out of a story in the fourth grade Reader; he was lost in it" (1). Australian imaginings, dreamings and nightmares are central to a reading of *Remembering Babylon*, just as they are reflected in the ideological concerns of a metanarrative of Australian growth that can be read across school Readers.

Alternatively, appropriation and power are interlinked when Europeans not only enact indigeneity through the mimicry of Aboriginal cultural practices but rather, when Europeans consciously adopt these practices as their own. Donald MacDonald's poem "The Gift of Song" in *The Victorian Readers Fourth Book* appropriates Aboriginal cultural practices through his reference to motifs of the dreamtime story or creation myth. In the poem, "a spirit of the hills" observes some lyre-birds dancing a graceful minuet. So entranced is the spirit that it wants to add another gift to the lyre-bird's repertoire. Significantly in this poem, it is the spirit world, the landscape of Aboriginal people's dreaming, that is stolen from them. MacDonald is consciously appropriating a "traditional" artistic and cultural practice

of the nation's Aboriginal peoples to lend a sense of authenticity to his own position as a uniquely *Australian* storyteller. By implication, MacDonald claims a sense of his own indigeneity. When read in light of MacDonald's other writing already analysed here, his imagining of an Aboriginal corroboree in "From a Western Hill-Top", the desire for an authentic Australian voice is intimately connected to an appropriation of Aboriginality.

Ideas about appropriation and authenticity continue to inform contemporary debates about Australian history, literature and art. At its most extreme, the desire for a "real" sense of community and belonging has seen non-Aboriginal writers and artists claiming Aboriginal identities to legitimise their work (Clark 102). What becomes clear from this reading of a school Reader metanarrative of national growth, however, is that the longing for indigeneity is not a recent phenomenon, but rather, one woven into collective Australian memories. This chapter has explored a highly ambivalent instance in the codings of a national story. Reading for metanarrative signs, it is clear that the national project of becoming indigenous (while simultaneously denying the existence or authenticity of Australian Aboriginal peoples) is both desirable and insidious. Institutionalised in school textbooks of the early twentieth century is an attempt to counteract an inherited European settler experience of estrangement and alienation, the unhomeliness of "home". Growing up Australian in the school Readers is a fraught process, one in which contradictory images of Aboriginality are necessary to defining a youthful nation in opposition to its unstable colonial past. The imitatory white indigene, a complex construction, is therefore my focus in the following two chapters.

Notes:

¹ I deliberately invoke skin colour here to reflect a larger metanarrative concern with race, colour and most particularly, with the fear of miscegenation and the perceived inauthenticity of what is termed “half-caste” status.

² There are some significant limitations and problems associated with simply substituting “Aboriginalism” for “Orientalism”. I try to avoid these by exploring some of the differences between colonial desire and “Aboriginalism”. Despite the limitations, however, “Aboriginalism” is a useful starting point for thinking about the representation of Aboriginal peoples in school Readers.

³ In an interesting footnote to this story of remembering, a recent conference paper by Amanda Nettlebeck (ASAL 2006), reveals a continued local preoccupation with uncovering and recognising the past. In connection with her research into colonial warfare and social memory, Nettlebeck argues that a local European history can bring indigenous history to the foreground. When a Port Lincoln history group rediscovers Hawson’s memorial and restores it, the issues of indigenous resistance are similarly raised and rediscovered.

⁴ Black trackers are a persistent and complicating presence in school Readers, and not only in stories of lost children. The centrality of the tracker figure to mythologies of Australia is evidenced in “An Adventure with Bushrangers”, in *The Adelaide Readers Book III*, an extract from Thomas Alexander Browne’s [Rolf Boldrewood] *The Miner’s Right*. For an ambushed gold escort, Aboriginal trackers offer the only hope of redemption: “The sooner we get the black-trackers on the trail, then the sooner we shall have a chance of seeing some of it back” (228).

⁵ See, for example, Robert Dixon’s *Writing the Colonial Adventure*, Richard Phillips’ *Mapping Men and Empire: A Geography of Adventure* and Martin Green’s *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire*.

⁶ As Martin Crotty rightly argues, there are multiple masculinities constructed in these kinds of adventure stories. My interest, however, is more particularly focussed on representations of Aboriginal peoples in some selected school Reader texts. As such, while I do not offer readings of the spectrum of white masculinities presented in adventure stories, I do not want to suggest that there is only one mode of figuring the masculine. I am concentrating on what is a dominant figuring, even as it is neither unified, nor wholly representative. For further illumination of Crotty’s argument see chapter 5, “At the Edge of Civilisation: Boys’ Adventure Stories in Australia” in his *Making the Australian Male: Middle-Class Masculinity in Australia*.

⁷ This story is adapted from Alfred St Johnston’s *In Quest of Gold*, or, *Under the Whanga Falls*, first published by Cassell in London in 1885. St Johnston, born about 1858 in England, worked as an official in Fiji and lived in Queensland for a period. He died in 1891.

⁸ To escape, Alec lifts Murri onto his horse. Then, having given the horse a little distance to build up speed, Alec rides his horse directly into the wall of flame. The story concludes: “The superb horse cleared the glowing heart of the fire, the flames of which, for one second, surged and beat about him, and landed with his double burden in safety on the glowing ashes covering the ground the fire had just passed over. A few strides more, and they were side by side with George” (227).

⁹ Henry Kingsley, an English writer of popular adventure fiction, lived in Australia for a short period before writing this novel when he returned to England. Henry is the younger brother of Charles Kingsley, whose novel *The Water Babies* is also popularly reproduced in extracts in school Reader selections. For post-colonial analysis of *The Water Babies* and Jamaica Kincaid's intertextual short story "Wingless", see Jo-Ann Wallace's "De-Scribing The Water Babies: The Child in Post-Colonial Theory" in *De-Scribing Empire*, edited by Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson.

¹⁰ Debates continue to circulate around estimates of Tasmania's Aboriginal population prior to European settlement. See, for instance, Henry Reynolds' *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia*, Keith Windschuttle's *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History* and Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark's *The History Wars*.

¹¹ Reflecting its importance to Tasmanian rather than more broadly Australian identities, this story appears only in the Tasmanian reading series.

¹² Other anthropological narratives included in school reading series include "Aboriginal Rock Pictures" in the *Queensland Readers Book V*, "Australian Native Sports", *The Adelaide Readers Book III*, and "An Ingenious Method of Catching Wild Ducks", in *The Adelaide Readers Book IV*.

¹³ Kendall's poem was first published in his collection *Leaves from Australian Forests* in 1869 (60).

¹⁴ This extract is from Gilmore's poem, originally titled "The Aborigines", published in *The Wild Swan: Poems* in 1930 (29-31).

¹⁵ Stories from Kate Langloh Parker's *Australian Legendary Tales* are also represented in *The Adelaide Readers Book III*. This reading book includes "The Galah, and Oolah The Lizard" and "Mooregoo The Mopoke, And Bahloo The Moon".

¹⁶ Parker's *Australian Legendary Tales: Folk-Lore of The Noongahburrahs as Told to The Piccanninies* was first published in 1896. *More Australian Legendary Tales* appeared in 1898.

¹⁷ Writing under her husband's name, Katherine Langloh Parker was the first Australian to collect and publish Aboriginal legends in a systematic way. She also completed an anthropological study of the Narran River Aborigines, *The Euahlayi Tribe*, published in 1905. For further examination of Katherine Langloh Parker's work and its resonances for both Australian literature and the politics of representation, see Judith Johnston's 2005 article "The Genesis and Commodification of Katherine Langloh Parker's Australian Legendary Tales (1896)", in *JASAL*, volume 4, 159-172. Also see Tanya Dalziel's 'Unsettling Sympathetic Women: Katherine Langloh Parker and Catherine Martin's An Australian Girl' in *Settler Romances and the Australian Girl*, University of Western Australia Press, 2004, 74-105.

¹⁸ These stories of human suffering were described in *Bringing Them Home*, a government-commissioned report on the removal of children from Aboriginal parents under previous Church and government policies. The report, based on the testimony of those removed, expressed the child removal as "genocide" according to the United Nations' 1948 definition (Curthoys "Historiography: Australia" 168).

¹⁹ There is also an important linguistic association here. In the US in the early 1800s “crow” was used as an offensive term to mean a black person. The Oxford English Dictionary notes the depreciatory meaning of this term. It is likely that the term was used in a similar manner in Australia. In *The Routledge Dictionary of Australian Slang* “crow-bait” is defined as an Australian colloquial term to mean an Aborigine, since about 1830.

A Maturing Australian Imagination: Literary Effects

I live to learn their story who've suffered for my sake, to emulate their glory and follow in their wake – (George L. Banks, Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book)

School Readers, at the pronouncement of their editors, were explicitly concerned with the propagation of a national imaginary. The preface to *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*, for example, states: “The young readers were to begin at home, to be taken in imagination to various parts of the Empire, to Europe and the United States of America, and thus gain a knowledge of their rich heritage and acquire a well-founded pride of race”. A chapter concerned with the literary effects of this racist and nationalistic imagining lies dangerously close to becoming a clichéd checklist of stereotypical Australianisms. Yet these elements in the Readers cannot be avoided, and nor should they. School Readers, in their very inception and production, are charged with the promotion of a persuasive, credible and reassuring narrative that imagines Australian growth as a natural progression from colonial outpost to independent nation. Importantly, such a narrative equally sets out to map a national character, the white indigene in all his guises (it is usually a “he”), at different points along the narrative’s trajectory, but especially during its beginnings.

If reading can be constitutive, and this does appear to be an intrinsic aim of such school textbooks, this chapter reads the overt, but fraught, characterisation of identity and culture within a particular body of nationalist texts (nationalist in the sense that they can be read as embodying the nation as “an imagined political community”). While earlier chapters have considered readings of more implicit notions of Australianness, this chapter proceeds to a discussion of the obvious construction of white national identity within the unique circumstances of school Readers and their institutional setting, a space in which future citizens “live to learn their story”, in order to emulate and “follow in their wake”.

In school Readers, the permeable categories of national “type”, especially those incarnations of a pioneering legend (variously axemen, miners, selectors, sacrificial wives and mothers, even Anzacs) are laid one over another in an epic story of hardship, mateship, failure and reward. Of course, these stories are interspersed with other texts in the Readers and as such; do not present a chronological account of the nation’s history. Rather, the stories can be loosely grouped together and read according to the ways in which they enact a particular historical narrative or version of the past (as drawn from a repertoire of national images and identities). According to these groupings, this chapter considers the literary effects of a central pioneering mythology, especially points at which its constituent elements appear to overlap, reinforce or diverge from one another. In attempting to isolate codings of national growth that are so prevalent in this body of texts, I have imposed an artificial and subjective order or logic. I don’t want to suggest that such groupings are the only possible ones, nor that they reflect the structuring of the Readers (or the Reader grade levels). Clearly, decisions about ordering the texts depend on my reading of their effects as metanarrative signs. These desired effects are the imagining of Australia as a society, culture and nation. In this way, Australia is claimed, cleared, built and settled by “pioneers”, the wide, open spaces of the interior provide a spiritual home for the white indigene, and those fighting men bred of the bush are of such calibre that the whole world stands in awe. Codings of suffering, endurance

(and glory) inform a maturing national imagination, and, in turn, equally encode the Readers' production of Australia and Australianness.

It is to ideal citizens, indeed the ideal or implied reader, that School Readers address their metanarrative of national growth (as couched in the celebrations of nationalist legends). In an important distinction, however, and one that I wish to make clear at the outset, the kind of Australian envisioned in school Readers is *not* the literary figure described by Russel Ward in the now canonical *The Australian Legend*. While Ward's bushmen do occasionally appear, the predominant evocation of an Australian legend across school Readers is more closely (though no less problematically) aligned with the kind of pioneering legend such as that described by historians John Hirst and Ann Curthoys and taken up in literary studies via Alan Lawson's theorisation of white settler identity. Undoubtedly, a pioneering ethos more effectively supports and promotes a metanarrative of national growth. Its myths of community building, in particular, equally invoke an ideal of active citizenship. The bushman legend is subsumed into the more useful pioneering paradigm because the pioneer story offers plurality and community values while the bushman is often singular and usually hostile. (And indeed, bushman types can be rather easily and usefully reconfigured within the codings of a pioneering legend).

There are some considerable dangers associated with my focus in this chapter. In attempting to locate and describe the national character of school Readers, I run the risk of reinscribing the racist and sexist boundaries of the "legend", along with adopting the kind of totalising approach warned against by David Carter and Gillian Whitlock. I think the warning is particularly pertinent here. As a literary institution, school Readers are just as seminal, and indeed, just as complex, as the target of Carter and Whitlock's cultural reading, the *Bulletin*. Given these concerns then, here I want to explore some iconic images or identifying characteristics of Australianness specifically in terms of how these operate as metanarrative signs in

the Readers' codings of national growth. I do not, by any means, offer the final word on this complex site of encoded white indigeneity.

Pioneers and proximity – the anxieties of settlement

According to the inherent logic of a metanarrative of national growth (and the codes or subcodes in which it signifies) images and ideas about the child of nation and the white indigene, as examined in previous chapters, reach maturation in the figure of a predominantly masculine, white "native" Australian, the pioneer. The Australian pioneer is figured primarily as embodying an enviable physicality and brutal certainty. His contact with the land and with the country's Aboriginal peoples is violent and corporeal, yet is always demonstrably necessary to the nation's survival, as well as to its eventual prosperity. The group of poems initially under examination here, Roderic Quinn's "The Australian", Frank Hudson's "The Pioneers", George Essex Evans's "The Nation Builders" and Andrew Barton Paterson's "The Old Australian Ways", demonstrate the Readers' literary production of the national beginnings as both rural and heroic. Beyond what is presented as Australia's "discovery" by explorers, the Readers' metanarrative of national growth is dependent on poems and stories of settlement and production. It is significant that historian John Hirst's influential exploration of the pioneer legend opens with reference to a Victorian School Reader. As Hirst argues, "schools have been the most influential purveyors of the pioneer legend and in literature for children it occurs in its purest form" (14). Hirst describes the pioneering mythology as something other than that identified by Russel Ward in *The Australian Legend* of 1958. Whereas Ward's Australian bushman is a nomadic, itinerant worker of the bush or outback, a shearer or drover for example, the pioneer legend celebrates the courage, enterprise and perseverance of those people who settle the land: "It is a nationalist legend which deals in an heroic way with the central experience of European settlement in Australia: the taming of the new environment to man's use" (Hirst 15).

Quinn's "The Australian", in the Victorian Readers Fifth Book, perhaps best encapsulates this notion of the nation's progression, from clearing and cultivating the land to the production of the nation's social fabric.¹ Quinn's poem is also one of the most "amnesiac", where the national imaginary remains largely unmarred by bloody contact with Aboriginal Australians. As literary critic Peter Otto reminds us, the popular narrative of farmers struggling against a hostile landscape "offers a colonial society a way of displacing the conflict between settlers and indigenous peoples onto a more acceptable narrative of a direct conflict between the settler and the land itself" (qtd in Curthoys 29). The "Australian" of the poem's title is a white, male, heterosexual hero. He is the idealised pioneer, the youthful embodiment of the nation itself, a figure of strength and prosperity:

He swings his axe in the golden morn;
The blade bites clean and free;
The trees must fall ere the land be ploughed,
And an axeman strong is he. (*The Victorian Readers Fifth Book*
191)

As these lines suggest, the Australian pioneer is assured in his sense of rightness and destiny. It is not only his superior physical attributes that seem to promise a bountiful future for the burgeoning nation. There is also a certainty about his judgement, his apperception and grasp of the future: "the trees must fall ere the land be ploughed" (191). This certainty is embodied in the image of the blade and is given form in the poem's rhythmic drive, punctuated in the consonants and syllabic meter of the second line. The following stanzas mark the progression of both the physical and psychological make-up of the nation:

A young man in a young land, he
Dreams noble dreams of youth;
And, foremost in the van of years,
He sows the seeds of truth. (193)

Not only must the land be cleared to make way for agricultural production, the pastoral stage of a progressive civilisation, but at the same time the national psyche

must be prepared for “sowing the seeds” of an imaginary that will map the national character. It is important to note the deliberate and calculated repetition of the words “young” and “dreams”. In this poem, the symbolic Australian does not merely clear the trees, plough the plain and sow the wheat; he is equally responsible for dreaming the nation into being. This role is also attributed to the child reader, who is expected to participate in the same kind of national imagining. Significantly too, the poem alludes to the idea that the imagining of nation is a particular version of the past. The Australian brings to earth “old wrongs that bind and thrall” so that his harvest, the future of the country, shall be “the sweetest bread of all” (193). In this sense, sowing the seeds of truth points to a story in which the pioneer, and by extension, the white people for whom he stands, are rightful inheritors of Australia’s bounty.

George Essex Evans’s “The Nation Builders” reinforces this imagining of nation with a very similar deployment of pioneering tropes.² Significantly, this particular poem is reproduced in almost all of the state school reading series under examination here, the *Queensland School Readers Book V*, *The Adelaide Readers Book V*, *The Tasmanian Readers Grade V* and *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*. In this poem, the nation’s origins are again located in the land itself – where the national territory is foreboding, pitiless and vast. The “molten skies, at noon, on the sun-cracked plain” command a “pitiless might” while the northern jungles are “walls” and the land “lies like a giant asleep” (*Queensland School Readers Book V* 13). In this way, Australia’s hugeness is emphasised in order to draw attention to the nation builders’ arduous task. These pioneers, a mere “handful of heroes” are pitted against the vagaries of the natural landscape, the floods and droughts, in order “to conquer a continent” [my emphasis] (13). The conquering of the continent, the simple yet effective juxtaposition of the few men against the immensity of the landscape, is both linguistically and ideologically charged. As Curthoys highlights in an essay about Australian mythologies, Australian nationalist discourses are informed by a struggle in which white settlers suffer as they seek to possess the land (“Mythologies” 13-14). The masculinist overtones of the settler figure, where

domination and possession are central, makes *his* story a gendered construct. Curthoys identifies the pioneer struggle as one of a number of competing victim narratives which characterise Australian historical mythology. Drawing on the religious themes of exile and exodus, the “settler as victim works against substantial acknowledgement and understanding of a colonial past and informs and inflames white racial discourse” (Curthoys “Mythologies” 16).

Indeed, in an example of the inflammatory nature of this victim narrative, especially in relation to race politics, Essex Evans’s poem is openly defiant of Australia’s Aboriginal peoples. In the opening stanza of this poem, the existence of frontier conflict is not merely alluded to, it is celebrated. In just the same vein as venerating the pioneer’s dominance over the enormous landscape, these heroes will conquer the continent’s Indigenous inhabitants. Fronting the nation builders “ever in vain” are “the bones that bleach on the sandhill, and the spears that redden with blood” (13). Such symbols point to a “victory won” when “the hearts of the Nation Builders shall know that the work is done” (13).

Essex Evans’s poem references a number of character types expected to populate an Australian narrative of national growth. In this sense, the pioneer legend does allow for considerable elasticity and the term “pioneer” has changed and adapted to accommodate a plurality of images. Indeed, the many dimensions of the pioneer legend are revealed in its critique (on the part of both historians and literary critics).³ In the context of this poem, and in the Readers more broadly, the pioneers can be read as not just early settlers on the land, but as all those who “went before” the current generation in building and developing a national future. In this sense then, in the north lie the pearl flotillas, in the east the axe rings in the heart of the ranges, and in the tropic scrub the settler carves a home. Australia’s gold mining history is also cited as pivotal in the poem’s inventory of the nation-builders’ work. The contributions and the loss of these souls are not causes for sentimentality in the poem’s recreation of an heroic version of the nation’s past. Rather, a tough and unflinching acceptance of the lot of such men is employed as a mark of the strength

and gravity of the nation's beginnings: "Tis war and stress, with never a pause to mourn for a stout heart gone,/ Till the lives of the Nation Builders have paid for the victory won" (15). In the sand of the "new-found West" for example, "strong men fall and die like sheep [...] by the dry stock-routes, by the burnt-up creeks, where the cattle sink and fail" (14).

The Readers' codings of national growth rely on such stories of fatigue and failure. Without a powerful sense of the incredible adversity that dogged Australia's early days as both British colony and federated nation, the stories we tell ourselves about our beginnings, particularly the qualities of the "nation builders", are diminished, no longer the stuff of legends and mythologies. It is important to note what is omitted in these myths of nationhood. As explored in the previous chapter, Australian Aboriginal peoples are largely silenced and elided. Significantly too, Australia's convict past and its origins as a penal settlement are almost entirely absent across all school Readers (only a single excerpt from Marcus Clarke's *For the Term of His Natural Life* rates a mention). Instead, the past celebrated in school Readers is peopled by the kinds of settlers who have endured, and emerged victorious from, a battle with one of the harshest continents on earth.

Essex Evans's poem ends with the certainty that the narrative of national growth inscribed in the poem is one ordained by God, "a Mighty Genius [...] the Over-soul" (16). This is significant in that it attempts to provide a vaguely spiritual justification for the destructive and bloody nature of Australia's settlement. It also provides further evidence to support Curthoys' argument that Australian historical narratives are informed by major themes of Judeo-Christian history. Particularly relevant here is the biblical narrative of the exodus from Egypt from the Promised Land. As Curthoys writes, citing the work of Schwartz, "a persecuted past is invoked to legitimate present policy" (17).⁴ The nation-builders are therefore not held accountable for great abuses of the Australian Aboriginal peoples, nor for what might be read as short-sighted exploitation of the natural environment. The nation builders are instead the physical manifestation of God's will; having finally reached

the land of plenty, they are “the hands of the Builder, who toileth and frameth afar” (16). Indeed, so intimately caught up in God’s plans are these servants that God “shapes the thought of the workers wherever His worlds may roll” (16). In this way, the poem claims a truth and certainty in the nation’s story of self: “On! Tho’ we grope and blunder, the trend of our aim is true!” (16). Moreover, “the eyes of the Master Worker” bear witness to the work of the nation builders, acknowledging that the task of Australian settlement is finished (16).

Frank Hudson’s “Pioneers”, the opening poem of *The Victorian Readers Fifth Book*, is also the school text cited by Hirst in his description of the pioneer legend.⁵ This poem knowingly produces a particular nationalist legend in which Australia’s history begins with the immigration of *free* settlers. In this way, the pioneers are heroic “old-world people” (1). As this poem demonstrates, pioneers as first immigrants and as Australian settlers are inextricably linked. Hirst suggests that in this way, the pioneer legend serves local, Australian and imperial patriotisms (in acknowledging a debt to Empire, this poem references a dual imperial/national identity as explored in my second chapter and its focus on an imperial curriculum in school Readers). In accord with the pioneering legend, the poem is centrally concerned with the struggle on the land. Australia is pictured as a place of wildness and strangeness. In this way, the pioneers enter as the youthful and spirited people with “the hearts to dare” and overcoming a wild, strange land draws on familiar images of early settler enterprise and endurance (1). Just as in “The Australian” and “The Nation Builders”, the land is cleared so that the soil can be ploughed and sown. “Our axes rang in the woodlands [...] And we turned the loam of our new-found home” (1). In a perpetual battle with the harsh landscape, the pioneers live in rough log shanties or leaking tents while “eager fossickers” travel “from sea to view of the mountains blue” to chase their fortunes (1). Thus the groundwork for nation is established, as is the debt owed to the pioneers:

We wrought with a will unceasing,
We moulded, and fashioned, and planned,
And we fought with the black, and we blazed the track,

That ye might inherit the land. (2)

This notion of debt is particularly pertinent to the legend of the pioneer. It suggests a character who works the land not just for himself but for the future of all Australians. The inclusive pronoun “we” disavows social or economic division, promoting a myth of an egalitarian and noble community of forefathers. Most significantly, the poem directly addresses the benefactors of such an illustrious past, an ideal reader who will not only inherit the land but who will carry on those values inscribed in its very settlement.

Also significant in Hudson’s poem is the overt acknowledgement of the battles between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Australians. “We fought with the black” is deeply contrary to a more benign view of white settlement that is generally encouraged in the texts selected for inclusion in School Readers (where Aboriginal peoples are dying out anyway and grateful for European intervention in their fate). Drawing again on Lawson’s interrogation of settler narratives as symbolic strategies: “The process of ‘settlement’ is always a project of both displacement and replacement. Prior owner-occupiers and prior figurations of space must be evacuated to make way for the settler and to conceal the actuality of violence” (1216). The poem goes on to demonstrate how the natural environment, and therefore the existence of Australian Aboriginal peoples, have been irrevocably transformed by European settlement. Where once the “wild cat’s cry o’er the sad bush silence broke” there are shops, churches, swift trains, “cities of stucco and smoke” (2). These are the emblems of a successful young nation, the tangible evidence of the debt owed to the pioneers, and in a repetition of Judeo-Christian stories of privation and reward, here is the “fruit of our labour” (2).

For obvious reasons then (their appeal to a great and glorious past, and their appeal to future generations to carry on the legacy of their forefathers), pioneering stories, images and poems are among the most popular texts reproduced across all Australian school Readers. Hence, my continued focus on them here. Another poem, Edward Dyson’s “The Old Whim Horse” and C. J. Dennis’s prose piece, “The

Year Round in Timber-Land" take up the threads of nostalgia and indebtedness in their reverence for the honest and spiritual life of the pioneer. Similarly, Andrew Barton 'Banjo' Paterson's "The Old Australian Ways" (in which Paterson's iconic Clancy appears), exemplifies an almost quantifiable "Australianness" animated in the figure of the pioneer and an associated story of growth.

In its more subtle use of settler narrative tropes, Edward Dyson's "The Old Whim Horse" achieves a powerful moment of reflection and *affect*. If, following Alan Lawson's arguments, the settler is a self-narrating subject; it is interesting to note how this poem narrates a settler subjectivity in the pathos and powerful symbolic capacity of the old whim horse. Most tellingly, "The Old Whim Horse" is included in nearly all of the state school Readers under examination here, in the Queensland, Adelaide and Tasmanian Fifth Books, and in the seventh of the Victorian Readers.⁶ The poem itself offers a romantic reminiscence of what was once the flourishing activity of goldfields life. The "digger" of the goldfields might be read as a kind of subset of the pioneering legend, and in some ways prefigures or informs aspects of Anzac. Apart from the reverence reserved for early explorers, Australia's "golden age" is pivotal to the national story. Here the miner is read as another kind of heroic pioneer, particularly because the poem nostalgically reflects on the gritty types who once subsisted in such a world. The old whim horse is a symbol of stoicism and perseverance, a reminder of the miners who have long since departed. Where once there was the noise of the stampers and the glow of lights in the huts, the whistle is now dumb, the whim boy is gone and "the shifts don't come" (*Queensland Readers* 92). Nevertheless, the "feeble horse" walks to the ring at the right hour, resigned to reliving history, or perhaps gaining strength from the re-enactment. In this way, the poem cleverly conjures up a sense of obligation to a shared national heritage. As metanarrative sign, this poem, a sentimental kind of memory work, preserves a version of Australia's pioneering past where growth is born of hardship and out of the pioneering sacrifice.

C. J. Dennis's "The Year Around in Timber-Land" (in *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*) self-consciously references the nation's growth in the way in which the piece is structured by seasonal change, settlement and development in the Australian bush.⁷ In this prose piece, however, the pioneer as metanarrative sign is a more ambivalent and problematic figure, foreshadowed in the narrative's opening. Like the pioneers themselves, the tallest and oldest of the trees are "like quiet sentinels". The reference to these sentinels standing in serried ranks makes the allusion to pioneers explicit (in that the term originated in a military context). In this way too, contact between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Australians is also acknowledged, albeit in a more distanced, euphemistic way. Like soldiers, these pioneers have survived contact with Australian Aboriginal peoples. Congruently, their old and wise trunks are "scored by the stone axes of some long-dead tribe" (22). Significantly, the Indigenous Australians are long-dead, relegated to the deep, pre-colonial past. In contrast, the new generation of Australians are yearning for the future: "Beside them, stripling spars grow sturdily, not yet so wise; but, like great healthy lads, they seem impatient for maturity" (22). Here, the trees represent, metonymically, the pioneers. The gum as emblem is particularly revealing of the inherent tensions and ambivalences that surface throughout school Readers. As Ian McLean has astutely observed, "Saplings are still native trees, symbols of the new nation that bear the imprint of a repressed Aboriginality" ("White Aborigines" 61). In what Lawson terms the "anxiety of proximity", where the other must remain to signify the boundary of the self, the implications of this repressed Aboriginality are significant for the white settler psyche: "The 'other', as a consequence of this 'almost but not quite' move, is therefore always in some sense present, always 'uncannily' ready for its return" (1221).

Unlike the gum trees though, and their operation in the narrative as complicatedly metonymic tropes of proximity, the pioneering men in Dennis's story are largely characterised as familiar figures, the axeman working in the depths of the forest and the bullock-driver toiling relentlessly alongside those animals he has come to resemble. Old Ben, however, as one of the settlement's original pioneers, is

interestingly not so much a figure of triumph as one of ambivalence. Unlike some of the poems considered here where the nation and the pioneer are fused as heroic and powerful, Ben is no longer in his prime and, as such, this piece of writing offers something a little more complex in terms of its representation of pioneering Australia. Old Ben is a relic of this era, a reminder of its harshness and brutality who, unlike the old whim horse, has not been so romanticised as to appear a sentimentalised portrayal of the past. While the way in which he is constructed is clearly emotive, his characterisation, though it is rudimentary, does suggest some fraying at the edges of the national imagining of self. Remembering a blaze one summer when his “missus” was still alive, Old Ben reveals a human element, a kind of weakness, often absent when it comes to the pioneering figures who occupy the national imaginary: “And with a hand, not like a human hand so gnarled it is with years of heavy toil, he hides a moment his old, wistful face, and sighs, ‘When my poor missus was alive’” (24).

Old Ben is only a momentary digression though. His entry into Dennis’s tale is only to presage a summer bushfire that sweeps through the settlement “with long, red fingers reaching for its prey” (24). In narrating national growth, stories of bushfire, of which there are several examples in school Readers, have a particular discursive purpose. Here the wildness, emptiness and ungovernability of the land (and nature) is strategic – where the emptiness is soon filled with the people, maps and courageous stories of white settlement. In the face of nature/the fire’s extraordinary power, the “tiny ants”, the settlers themselves, typify the kinds of qualities that have been adopted as part of the map of national character. Yet, again, like the scarred trees at the beginning of the story, a kind of unsettlement haunts the bushfire scene. Where the land is a metaphor for native, this is also an instance in which the land/native threatens to *consume* the settler, and another moment in which the repressed threatens a return. When a house is lost, however, a laconic Australian humour is written in to deftly repel any uncanny instance of momentary unsettlement. Turning to a neighbour the homeless Brice laughs, saying, “Twill boil a billy, anyhow, for tea” (25). This is more familiar territory where mapping the

quintessential Australian pioneer is concerned. The following day, however, when the land is revealed as black, smoking and desolate, it is also “a land to break the hearts of strong men” (25). The landscape (and we might also read the native here) overwhelms and threatens to engulf the people battling it, in what Lawson identifies as the trope of incorporation, another example of white settler anxiety. In the more common (and overt) rhetoric that encodes the Australian pioneer, the heroism of the pioneers is all the more convincing because of the opposition they so willingly face: “But these bush optimists, these giant-hearts, looking on it all as part of daily life, repair the damage, and go back to work” (25).

The heroic construction of the mytho-pioneer is obvious again in the winter time of Dennis’s story when news arrives that Bates, “a low-down rascal”, is hurt. Immediately, his neighbours spring into action and “they who yesterday vowed him a rogue [...] tender as women, they bear him down the mountain-side” (26). In an invocation of the masculinist Australianism that is mateship, Dennis’s story is unsubtle and calculated. “That’s the bush way: the boon of simple minds, the lasting brother-love that underlies all petty strife, and sweetens wondrously the lives of those who toil and live as they” (26). On this uplifting note, “The Year Around in Timber-Land” ends in spring, naturally enough, when “flowers bloom, birds sing and all the world puts on its gayest dress” (27). It is a suitably triumphant ending when the new life of the bush and the new life of the nation are fused in a vision of youthfulness and vitality.

Compared with the tensions underlying Dennis’s text, “The Old Australian Ways” in *The Victorian Readers Fifth Book* is a more overtly celebratory moment in the genealogy of a pioneering legend or discourse. Coming from the pen of ‘Banjo’ Paterson, whose works have long been claimed by what might be described as a broadly nationalist agenda, this is hardly surprising. Like Henry Lawson, Paterson is an easily identifiable figure of what has been popularly (though perhaps wrongly) credited as 1890s “nationalism”, when bush mythology and pioneering or bushman legends supposedly reflected nationalistic fervour.⁸ To highlight the ever-widening

gap between the “mother country” and Australia, Paterson’s poem opens with a departure. This is a literal departure from London, but also a more figurative one in terms of Australia’s distinctive culture and landscape, a culture that can no longer be tied to its English roots. This is particularly apparent where Paterson claims for the nation, most obviously in the poem’s title for example, a tradition, a land and a story that is uniquely *Australian*.

And down the Channel, groping blind,
We drive her through the haze
Towards the land we left behind –
The good old land of “never mind”
And old Australian ways. (30)

Unsurprisingly then, Paterson draws on a repertoire of stock Australian characteristics produced by a popular nationalist literature and cultural mythology, one in which the true Australian is located in the Bush (with a capital “B”). Whereas English folk are constrained by “narrow ways” and “bear the long-accustomed yoke of staid conservancy”, Australians, figured as young men in a young land, animate the national imaginary (30). In this poem, the imagined community is youthful, unique: “our” roads are “new and strange” (30). The poem also maps the national character as one organically grown out of the pioneering legend: “And through our blood there runs/ The vagabonding love of change” (30). But where an anxiety about genetic stock and racial purity is always only below the surface, the blood flowing through these courageous wanderers is notably inherited from a white European father; “Our fathers came of roving stock/ That could not fixed abide” (31). A not-so-subtle distinction must be drawn between these itinerant heroes and the movement of Aboriginal peoples across the landscape, in which nomadism is evidence of an “uncivilised” race.

Typical of Paterson’s obsession with the superiority of the country versus city life and values, those residing in urban areas are likened to living “behind a prison’s bars” (30). This bush/city dichotomy is a central feature of nationalist literary work, or, at least, what is claimed as such. As John Carroll argues (after the work of

Graeme Davison), “these antipodean Rousseaus set up their bushman heroes as antidotes to the poisons of city life” (148). Naturally then, the lack of a particularly rural experience, the stars, wild birds and breezes whispering in the wheat, marks city dwellers out as being imprisoned by their urban existence. They are out of touch with the real Australia, the imagined community that poems such as these seek to create and animate. Those caught in the trap of city living, people who are either unaware of their heritage or who are not willing to acknowledge it, these people are addressed directly by Paterson’s poem. “The Old Australian Ways” entreats urban dwellers to “throw the weary pen aside/ And let the papers rest,/ For we must saddle up and ride/ Toward the blue hill’s breast” (31). This is a call to action, a knowing celebration of a version of the past, the power of the pioneering trope in a national narrative of growth.

And we must travel far and fast
Across the rugged maze,
To find the Spring of Youth at last,
And call back from the buried past
The old Australian ways. (31)

It is significant that the poet sees the journey as one concerned with the spring of youth and a buried past. The pioneering spirit represents an authentic Australianness and recovering the pioneering spirit can be likened to locating a spring of youth, where the nation is refreshed and revitalised by becoming permanently aligned with an imagining that sees the nation’s roots, its true self, as represented by the trials and successes of its early settler/pioneering days. Yet the notion of a *buried* past is problematic in that *repression* inheres in the process of burial and a buried Australian past must always be the past of its first peoples, the Aborigines. In itself repressing such a reading of the poem, the next stanza turns to another ostensibly white legend of Australian cultural mythology, the bushman type, here imagined as Paterson’s iconic Clancy of the Overflow.

When Clancy took the drover’s track
In years of long ago,
He drifted to the outer back

The shift to Clancy is one of those points at which it becomes difficult to separate the bushman and the pioneer legend in the sense that both serve the same purpose in this text (a mapping of national character that sets Australia apart from others). In "The Old Australian Ways", Clancy travels the plains and hills as he drifts outback, the image of the free-wheeling bushman complete as he carries a stockwhip in his hand. In another disturbing allusion to bloody contact between European pioneers and Australian Aboriginal peoples though, Clancy, the incarnation of an ideal Australian memory, does not emerge unblemished/unscathed. Following his travels Clancy reaches "The Town of Come-and-help-yourself/ In Rough-and-ready Land", pointing to the myth of an empty Australia, a "rough and ready" place where anything goes if there is land for the taking (32). Encouraging all Australians to claim this past, the poem urges a rediscovery of Clancy's path, a journey open to those who are still in touch with a particular national heritage: "And, if it be that you would know/ The tracks he used to ride,/ Then you must saddle up and go/ Beyond the Queensland side" (32). Significantly, this far out back is also "beyond the reach of rule or law", it is a place where anything can happen, where the past can be rediscovered and reconstituted (32). The rewards of such a journey will be great, the poem promises. Riding all day, the searcher will discover "Nature's homestead" and it is this wondrousness that promises a revelation, an understanding of the pioneering days, the bushman's life, the old Australian ways: "You then might see what Clancy saw/ And know what Clancy knew" (32).

Clancy undoubtedly embodies the white indigene described and critiqued by both Goldie and Lawson respectively. A shearer, drover, bushman and pioneer, Clancy possesses a nomadic spirit, a desire to roam the country, and to commune with it, in absolute, perfect freedom. A "native" of the Australian bush, he has a spiritual and enviable connection with the landscape and is as close as the national imaginary can come to the authentic Australian. He appears again in Paterson's iconic "Clancy of the Overflow", in *The Victorian Readers Sixth Book*.⁹ Simply and effectively, this poem again draws on tropes of binarism to contrast a dull and stressful city life with the

freedoms of an uninhibited lifestyle in the bush. In this way, the “authentic” Australia is almost always located in the bush, represented by, in a kind of synecdoche, the hard-working men who negotiate it. Quite consciously, this poem draws on an “imagined” national character. The poem’s speaker, a city-dweller at a desk job, is tapping into this imaginary when he revisits his memories of a man he met shearing down the Lachlan, years ago: “In my wild erratic fancy visions come to me of Clancy/ Gone a-droving ‘down the Cooper,’ where the Western drovers go” (113). The desk clerk’s fancy sees Clancy knowing uniquely Australian bush pleasures, the greetings of bush friends, the murmur of breeze and river, and “the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended” (115). The main point of comparison then, for the townsman at least, is the sheer magnitude of a natural Australian landscape, the incredible sense of space, and the freedom and physical vitality this implies. It is an importantly *empty* landscape. Conversely, in the city, the air is fetid, tall buildings block out the miserable sunlight and the people are pallid, stunted and weedy. Clearly, these are not the kind of Australians invoked by a heroic narrative of national growth. Rather, bushmen, stockmen and pioneering types such as Clancy, those who witness the “wondrous glory of the everlasting stars”, are the same for and about whom the mythologies of nation are constructed (115).

Civilising the interior: gender, landscape and sacrifice

To this point, my discussion of the Readers’ production of Australia’s pioneering legend has concentrated on a male figure of national vitality and endurance. Largely, this is because national mythologies are focussed around masculinity and its performance in particular versions of the past. I want to concentrate briefly on the construction of this pioneering mythology/masculinity (where one is almost always read in place of the other) before I then consider the Readers’ literary production of pioneering women and their roles in a story of national growth. Importantly, while Clancy remains timeless and rudderless in the landscape of Paterson’s poem, other Australian legends are finally and forever lost, betrayed by the feminine. Harry Dale, of Henry Lawson’s “The Ballad of the Drover” (in *The Victorian Readers Fifth Book* and *Western Australian Reader Book IV*), is returning home

to visit a sweetheart when he discovers a flooded river barring his path.¹⁰ Dale fulfils some of those stereotypical and legendary characteristics identified as Australian masculinity: a capacity for physical endurance and prowess, as well as a reckless improvidence. Sadly though, Harry Dale underestimates the power of the “fatal stream”, nature as the feminine and demonic, and the river claims his youth and strength while only half way across (*Victorian Readers* 21). Only the pack-horse and Dale’s cattle dog emerge on the opposite bank. Heightening allusions to loyalty and mateship, and the dangers of masculine entanglement with the feminine (Dale is destined for both the domestic and female when he dies), the “faithful dog” returns to the river, swimming against the current to the place where his master drowned: “And round and round in circles/ He fights with failing strength,/ Till, borne down by the waters,/ The old dog sinks at length” (22).

Harry Dale’s recklessness, the youthful confidence of the nation which he embodies, is explored in another Paterson poem “Lost”, reproduced in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade IV*. In this narrative, a boy poised on the brink of manhood has “his wilful way”, riding the “Reckless filly” over to the Two-mile and back (195). Like for Harry Dale, the intervention of the female causes the boy-man’s death and the bush is framed as the spiritual home of wild souls. Not only does the filly (responsible for his death) run away to join “the wild mob’s ranks”, it is in the wilderness that the boy finds eternal rest: “The ranges held him precious, and guarded their treasure well” (196). Though it is something of a digression, this poem is interesting in terms of its gender constructions (where the filly is a whore who betrays the youth and his mother is a long-suffering and sacrificial saint) and the way in which aspects of popular Australian mythologies and settler tropes are both referenced and explored, the lost child and the white indigene for example.

In *The Adelaide Readers Book III* and in the *Swan School Readers Fifth Book*, masculine identity is encoded as central to national growth in Henry Kendall’s “Song of the Shingle-Splitters”.¹¹ Naturally, the landscape inhabited by these men is “dark” and “wild”, an untamed, uncivilised landscape (and this is highlighted by “the dingoes

nightly yell") (*Adelaide Readers* 101). Yet it is a pure kind of life, and the bush is established as a separate moral universe (Davison 123). In this sense it is feminised but it is a sacred version of the feminine, the anti-type of the seductive but empty pleasures of the city. Importantly, a sense of community and connectedness is the distinction drawn between these men of the forest and their city counterparts. Despite the harshness of the work and the simplicity of their fare, the bushmen share an enviable bond that is crucial to literary imaginings of a masculinist, Australian ideal of mateship. Graeme Davison has argued that this element of the bushman myth can be traced to the alienated and impressionable young men newly arrived in Sydney or Melbourne who were responsible for its inception (111). Indeed, at the end of the day, the men of this poem come together to "sit and smoke, o'er yarn and joke, by the hut fire's sturdy blaze" (103). Urban living and the city, drawn comparatively in the next stanza, is a place of "din, and sorrow, and sin" (103). Reiterating the sacredness of a masculine pioneering mythology (even if it occurs in a symbolically feminine landscape) the hard work and simplicity of life in Australia's wilderness is likened to a religious or spiritual experience: "But yet Heaven smiles on the forest aisles,/ And God in the woodland dwells [...] Our psalm is the breeze in the lordly trees" (104). As part of the School Readers' metanarrative, this poem's inclusion reiterates the familiar story of conquest, settlement and expansion. Again, it is possible to read here the overlap between the bushman and the pioneering myth.

Yet there is an important point of divergence from this mapping of the national character, the literary production of the pioneering woman and her contribution to narratives of national growth, undoubtedly a literary construct of her own. Probably the most renowned example of this uniquely Australian woman is Henry Lawson's "The Drover's Wife" which appears across state reading series (*The Victorian Readers Fifth Book*, *The Tasmanian Readers Grade V*, *Queensland School Readers Book V* and *The Adelaide Readers Book V*).¹² Given this story's iconic status and the feminist and post-colonial critique it has already received, I do not consider it here. Rather, George Essex Evans's "The Women of the West", in *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*,

provides another example of the kind of woman responsible for settling the nation.¹³ Both Hirst and Curthoys argue that the inclusion of women makes the pioneering legend a more democratic one, particularly when compared with the myth of the bushman as described by Ward. Indeed, Curthoys writes: "It is popular because it is so inclusive of and within Anglo-Celtic Australia, crossing the serious social divides of class and gender, celebrating small and large farmers and men and women alike" (Curthoys "Mythologies" 20). The woman pioneer, however, is always constructed within a masculinist discourse and as such, is constrained and limited by those same gendered codings of Australianess. While she is necessary to pioneering mythologies, her inclusion is always contingent and her celebration, I would argue, is only ever fleeting. For the pioneering woman is represented as a sacrificial figure. In the outback, women lose their beauty and their softness, becoming instead the washed out and colourless images of Lawson's story and Evans's poem (and Drysdale's notable painting). Women are not heroic because they don't have the agency of their male counterparts - they merely follow men into the wilderness. In Evans's poem for example, "for love they faced the wilderness – the women of the West" (69). Women's presence is always dependent on men. Husbands and fathers determine the places women inhabit on the nation's frontier, in the slab-built homestead "of some lately taken run", in huts on new selections, or in the tents beside railway constructions (70). In this sense, the bush is "no place for a woman". Simultaneously, however, the bush is paradoxically *the* place of Woman, in which a Western symbolic and binarist order always locates the feminine in nature (Schaffer 56).

In a further contradiction, the pioneering women of the West leave behind that which is symbolic of civilisation – urban spaces, domesticity and femininity - at the same time as they are expected to reinstate civilisation in their very presence on the colonial frontier. As Marilyn Lake rightly argues, "in the context of a British colonial settlement white women assumed a special authority as the agents of civilisation and custodians of the race" (13). However, as Lake also notes, while white women were the bearers of culture, morality and order, they were always especially

vulnerable in a masculine settler society. This vulnerability (explored already in my discussion of the figure of Jane Duff and the bushwoman of Barbara Baynton's short story "The Chosen Vessel") is acted out within and across the boundaries of two semiotic fields – both the landscape and women's bodies. For the women of the West, as well as being forced to renounce the safety of a known environment, the vine-covered cottages of town, "the red sun robs their beauty" and "the slow years steal the nameless grace" (70). Here the bush becomes a place of longing and desire where the women languish alone and unheard. This emphasises the role of the pioneer woman as a sacrificial one. Whereas men sacrifice their youth to tame the new land and uncover its secrets, they are rewarded in later life as the (feminine) landscape is overcome and made productive: the country out west is "opened up" as pioneering men and their (following) families increasingly push back the boundaries of the frontier. Even from within the literary construct of Evans's poem, women are unrecognised. Their place in a pioneering story is one of concealment and silence: "They only hear the beating of their gallant, loving hearts;/ But they have sung with silent lives the song all songs above -/ The holiness of sacrifice, the dignity of love" (70). Furthering this sense of women's stoic acceptance of their subservience, the women of the west hold the father's creed (again Judeo-Christian overtones of obedience colour the pioneer legend) and heed every call made of them: "We faced and fought the wilderness, we sent our sons to die" (71).¹⁴ Women are the symbolic interior of the nation, a site of reproduction and civilisation. In opposition to men's physicality and displays of outward power/masculinity, especially as they overcome the continent's harsh interior: "The hearts that made the nation were the women of the West" (71).

Similarly, in the abridged version of C. J. Dennis's "The Year Around in Timber-Land" (as considered earlier), the woman pioneer is exclusively a figure of sacrifice. Like the women of the west and Henry Lawson's evocation of a bush woman, the "lean bush-wife" is no longer feminine and soft, but rather, she works tirelessly "to ease the load of labour for her man" (23). According to the sketch drawn by Dennis, the bush-wife's "anxious days" arrive in autumn as she prepares for the siege of the

coming winter in the mountains. “Uncomplaining”, because a stoic bush woman never bemoans her lot in life (at least not in these stories and poems), she “asks no praise for all the sacrifice she gives” (25). As usual then, she is a sacrificial female who bravely gives her life to building a domestic environment in the midst of a decidedly hostile one. Like the women of the west, the women of Dennis’s pioneering landscape “are the unsung heroines whose tragedies few know, and fewer still understand” (25-26).

In her now classic feminist study of Australian identity and nationhood, *Women and the Bush*, Kay Schaffer argues that Australian culture is shaped by a pervasive and perversive idea of the land as a place of desire against which white, male, European Australians can measure themselves. Here the bush is a charged and contradictory semiotic landscape: “The male-as-norm and land-as-other; the bush as central and city as peripheral to self-definition; and the personification of the bush as the heart, the Interior – a mysterious presence which calls to men for the purposes of exploration and discovery but is also a monstrous place in which men may either perish or be absorbed” (52). The pioneering legend animates the landscape as a locus of desire, a feminised interior. In the Victorian reading series, the representation of the Mallee region in the state’s north-west evokes a masculine mastery and possession of the land (along with an instance of conscious regionalism). The Mallee’s productive capacity is taken up in Charles Souter’s poem “From the Siding” reproduced in *The Victorian Readers Fourth Book*. From Souter’s *The Mallee Fire, and Other Verses*, the poem opens with those references to the Mallee that reveal its transformation as a story of triumph, as Victoria’s wheat belt: “When the sun has been hot on the sand,/ And the day has been weary and long,/ And the last load is dumped at the siding” (1). “Springtime in the Mallee” (in *The Victorian Readers Fifth Book*) is more explicit about this Edenic landscape as a site of pioneer sacrifice and promise; where a sacred story of national growth necessarily draws on religious iconography and foundation myths. Subduing nature, whether represented in wilderness, women or Indigenous peoples, is central to the pioneering paradigm. And having penetrated the interior, the land is evoked in

Romantic metaphors, a paradise and bountiful Eden: “Only those who have been closely associated with the north-western part of Victoria can really credit the springtime beauty of this Mallee country – country which, as time wears on and the thousands of *acres as yet untouched by man are opened up*, will prove to be one of the finest wealth-producing areas in the state” [my emphases] (183). Though there are still elements of the unknown in the region, the Mallee is likened to a biblical land of plenty when, in the spring, it is ‘transformed into a beautiful garden’ (183). Its potential for production is almost inconceivable, the lush vegetation that covers the landscape is comparable to the pastoral ideal: “The ground is hidden with thick, green grass, a foot or so high; and the cultivated fields, hundreds of acres in extent, resemble so many vast lawns” (183).

In Mabel Forrest’s poem “Creeks Out West” (in *The Queensland School Readers Book IV*), the landscape withholds its secrets of plenitude. The space described is an environment long associated with Australia’s uniqueness (simultaneously an object of desire and threat), a narrative in which the country is often inhospitable, *impenetrable* and harsh. Underneath “heat-white sand” and below the cattle track, lie the “silent tides along the creeks Out Back” (231). Like the Victorian stories and poems of the remote Mallee country, Forrest’s poem evokes a landscape that can only be known to the native - in this poem, the white indigene. The very presence of subterranean waterways suggests a regional consciousness in which intimacy with the outback is a mark of identity. “[S]triking through the heavy sand a water-gaining quest,/ The bushman fills his billy from the hidden stream Out West” (232). In this poem, “Out Back” and “Out West” assume a mythical importance and secretiveness. Just as the waters are concealed beneath the sands in the beds of rivers and creeks, the fertile and feminine inner life of the landscape lies hidden, and all the more seductive: “And when the stars like shattered gems flash all about the sky,/ Far underneath the dew-damp sand the hidden waters lie” (233). The idea of woman lies embedded in linguistic constructions of landscape even as she is often absent from stories of nation and nationness.

The Anzac legend

Nowhere is the white, masculinist domain of the Australian legend more apparent than in the story of Anzac. The figure of the Anzac, and the codings of national growth with which he is so powerfully charged, provides the final focus of this chapter. For, indeed, the romanticisation of pioneering and bush life (in all its prismatic literary effects) is taken to its ultimate conclusion in the mythology of Gallipoli. For the national imaginary, the “digger” is a powerful symbol of Australia’s manhood, while the participation of Australia in the First World War is often cited as evidence of the nation’s maturation, its “coming of age”, and the Anzac is viewed as a representation of Australia’s national character, combining elements of the “battler”, an anti-authoritarian and egalitarian spirit, physical endurance and mateship. In the Anzac legend, the sacrificial narratives of white pioneers and images of the bushman’s unrivalled loyalty to his mates are fused with mythologies of war to construct a potent discourse of heroism, especially as the narrative trope of the war hero encodes national growth. As Curthoys observes: “It is not too much to say that in Australian popular political culture, commemoration of war displaces the political formation of the nation through federation as the emotional locus of a sense of nationhood” (27). In his study *Inventing Anzac* Graham Seal recognises the narratological elements of what Curthoys locates as the cultural site of nationhood: “A ‘legend’ is also a narrative, a meaningful progress of events from a beginning, through a series of events to a prefigured end. The traditions of the digger and Anzac are the supreme national story and, indeed, are often referred to as ‘the story of Anzac’. The elements of Gallipoli and the Western Front, both historical and fictional, were rapidly woven into a narrative of heroism, sacrifice and patriotism” (7). Some texts that create the life of the Anzac legend in School Readers include “The Departure of the Anzacs from Mudros” (*The Tasmanian Readers Grade VI* and *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*), “The Landing of the Anzacs”, “Leaving Anzac” and “Anzac Day” (from *The Victorian Readers Seventh Book*) and “At Anzac”, “Greater Than We Knew”, “To the Fallen” and “The Legacy” (all from *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*).¹⁵

"The Departure of the Anzacs from Mudros", "The Landing of the Anzacs" and "Leaving Anzac" are all excerpts from John Masefield's *Gallipoli*. Masefield, an English poet and writer (and later Poet Laureate 1930-67), worked with the Red Cross on the Gallipoli Peninsula for some time during 1915. His accounts of the experience, imbued as they are with a note of historical accuracy, are nonetheless powerfully emotive and subjective. Of course, the purpose of his history, to plead the Allied cause in America, is a powerful influence. Although Masefield writes of events with the authority of an eyewitness account, he is aware of his role as a maker of heroes and writer of legend. In Masefield's account of the transports awaiting departure from Mudros Harbour, he writes that the ships bear "a freight of human courage" (*Tasmanian Reader* 94-95). He deliberately invokes a sense of awe and tragedy, even unearthliness, in describing this human cargo: "No such gathering of fine ships has ever been seen upon this earth, and the beauty and the exultation of the youth upon them made them like sacred things as they moved away" (95). Masefield, as an Englishman, claims these fine men as coming from all parts of the British world, from Africa, Australia, Canada, India, the Mother Country, New Zealand, and remote islands in the sea. As British peoples, they are united. These Britons have left their homes "that they might offer their lives in the cause *we* stand for" [my emphasis] (96). The racist discourse here is deliberate and calculated, particularly as it might appeal to British descendants in the former British colony, America. As Masefield acknowledges, the offering of these young lives, his narrative's powerful fusing of sacrifice, race and imperialism, will mean that many of these glorious examples of manhood will not see or exult in the sun again. For those who do survive, the battle will be long and weary: "And those not taken thus would be under the ground, sweating in the trench, carrying sandbags up the sap, dodging death and danger, without rest or food or drink, in the blazing sun or the frost of the Gallipoli night, till death seemed relaxation and a wound a luxury" (97). The rhetoric of Masefield's *Gallipoli*, the legend he narrates, supports Bill Gammage's reading of the centrality of race (or more particularly, racial discourses) to the construction of the Anzac legend. In his essay "Anzac", Gammage takes up the connections between war, race and Empire. He argues that those

important qualities valuable in war - strength, courage, patriotism, honour, sacrifice and endurance – were perceived as inherent in the superior Anglo-Saxon race (60). Thus, brutal images of the terrible fate awaiting the virtuous defender of the British race are necessarily part of creating his legend.

According to Masfield, despite the knowledge that they might soon be dead or “mangled, blinded or broken, lamed, made imbecile, or disfigured”, the Anzacs are triumphant as they move out, strong and steadfast in accepting and facing the inevitable (96). In mythologising this almost inhuman aspect of the Anzac forces, Masfield writes, “All that they felt was a gladness of exultation that their young courage was to be used. They went like kings in a pageant to the imminent death” (97). The performative aspects of the Anzac legend are made explicit here. As they pass on the way to the sea, the soldiers, sailors, the men ashore and the men in the ships not yet moving, all cheer wildly and swing their caps. It is an arresting image, particularly as Masfield describes it, a harbour ringing with cheering “till all the life in the harbour was giving thanks that it could go to death rejoicing” (97). Pre-empting the significance of this moment in the recording of a war, the writer suggests that nobody who heard the cacophony of cheering could ever forget it or think upon it without being affected: “It broke the hearts of all there with pity and pride; it went beyond the guard of the English heart” (97). Importantly, Masfield again claims the heroism of these men for England, where the imperialist preoccupation with the British race is pre-eminent. This claim for Britishness is all the more notable when the Anzacs supposedly eschew the historical animosity between England and France while passing the French ships: “As they passed the French ships, the memory of old quarrels healed, and the sense of what sacred France has done and endured in this great war, and the pride of having such men as the French for comrades, rose up in their warm souls, and they cheered the French ships more even than their own” (97).

“The Landing of the Anzacs” is also from Masfield’s *Gallipoli*, and in this excerpt, having sailed from Mudros on April 24th, the Australian and New Zealand Army

Corps arrive off the coast of the peninsula at about half-past one in the morning of April 25th, 1915. The most notable aspects of this passage are the careful rendering of the hostile landscape awaiting the Anzacs and the sheer force of enemy numbers. In this way, the insurmountable odds facing the Anzacs are drawn in graphic relief, ensuring that their eventual withdrawal from the area will be read as triumph rather than failure. From Masfield's descriptions it is clear that the landscape is an enemy in itself: "The ground above these beaches is exceedingly steep, a sandy cliff [...] Inland from the beach, the land of the peninsula rises in steep, broken hills and spurs, with clumps of pine upon them, and dense undergrowths of scrub" (*Victorian Readers* 63). The landing is a brutal and bloody affair. Under heavy fire, many men on the advancing boats are killed before they even reach the beach. Those men that survive must wade ashore to charge the enemy. It is clear that the Turkish forces are equally determined. It is a scene of desperate fighting: "All over the broken hills there were isolated fights to the death, men falling into gullies and being bayoneted; sudden duels, point-blank, where men crawling through the scrub met each other, and life went to the quicker finger; heroic deaths, where some half-section which had lost touch were caught by ten times their strength, and charged, and died" (64). The Anzacs are at a clear disadvantage because they lack knowledge of this inhospitable stretch of coast: "No man of our side knew that cracked and fissured jungle" (64). Combined with the concerted efforts of the Turkish defence, descriptions of an enigmatic landscape enable Masfield to draw a scene of imminent disaster where the Anzacs' courage is in stark contrast to the realities of their situation: "As they went, the words of their song supported them, the proud chorus of 'Australia will be there,' which the men on the torpedoed *Southland* sang as they fell in, expecting death" (65). Masfield names many heroes. The boatmen and the beach working-parties are the "unsung heroes" as they withstand "intense and concentrated fire of every kind" (65). There are also heroes who, out in the scrub, are fighting the enemy to the death "for there was no thought of surrender in those marvellous young men; they were the flower of this world's manhood, and died as they had lived, owning no master on this earth" (66). As an image of sacrifice, a man cut down in the height of his youth (and virility) is particularly

important as it resonates across school Readers and their metanarrative. Where meaning is constantly circulating around codings of youthfulness and growth, the flower of manhood, and the moment at which this flowering is spent, are especially potent.

This passage's inclusion in the Readers is significant in that ultimately (and despite the alternative narratives of contemporaneous histories and folkloric traditions), it presents a victorious version of events at Gallipoli. About half way through the excerpt, the emphasis switches from the initial attack and landing, to the defence of the ground so sorely won. In this way, in claiming that "our attack had to hold on to what it had won, against more than twice its numbers", the events at Gallipoli can be read as evidence of a victory at the same time as the loss of so many men can be read as heroic. "Against this position, held by at most 8,000 of our men, who had had no rest and had fought hard since dawn, under every kind of fire, in a savage, rough country unknown to them, came an overwhelming army of Turks to drive them into the sea [...] They came fresh from superior positions, with many guns, to break a disorganized line of breathless men not yet 'dug in'"(66). Their tenacity and courage ensures that the Anzacs will emerge deserving of their legend. The mythology surrounding the figure of the Anzac is already being finely woven in Masefield's words: "Men worked at the digging-in till they dropped asleep upon the soil; more Turks charged, and they woke, and fired, and again dug" (67).

Inevitably though, the first night in the scrub brings more death and disaster. When, in the early hours, the Anzacs do not have enough men to hold the line, orders are given to fall back to a shorter line. The mass confusion that ensues is explained by the darkness and the uproar, with some sections refusing to fall back, some losing their way, and still others mistaking the order for instructions to re-embark. Such a situation might have signalled the end for the Anzacs. As Masefield writes though, in a manner that likens war to public school sports rivalry (reminiscent of Newbolt's refrain from "Vitai Lampada" – "play up and play the game"), "at this breaking of the wave of victory, this panting moment in the race, when some of the runners had

lost their first wind, encouragement reached our men" (68). This encouragement, news that an Australian submarine had sunk a Turkish transport, "had the effect of a fresh brigade" (68). The men rally up the hill and the new, shorter line is reinforced and held "and the rest of the night was never anything but continued victory to those weary ones in the scrub" (69). Highlighting the importance of a reading of events that depicts the Anzacs as successful, despite the earlier details of confusion, death and misunderstood orders, the excerpt in the Readers, following an ellipsis, ends thus: "By the night of the second day, the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps had won and fortified their position" (69).

Masefield's "Leaving Anzac" is a somewhat more problematic passage in that essentially, it records the withdrawal of Australian and New Zealander troops from Gallipoli. It is problematic in the sense that it is not the stuff of heroic sacrifice and victory as presented in the earlier excerpts. Yet Masefield still manages to infuse his account with a grave solemnity that does not allow the withdrawal to be equated with defeat. The Anzac legend must remain intact. This Masefield achieves primarily in his description of the departure as a carefully orchestrated, skilful ruse: "It was not an easy task to remove large numbers of men, guns, and animals from positions commanded by the Turk observers and open to ever cruising aeroplanes" (72). By pretending that the Anzacs are being reinforced rather than evacuated, the tactics employed by "our army" ensure that the "Turks were deceived, completely deceived" (72). In this way, the Turkish army is constructed almost as an object of ridicule, an important way for the English writer to save face: "For the twelve days during which the evacuation was in progress at Anzac and Suvla, the Turks were plainly to be seen digging everywhere to secure themselves from the feared attack" (72).

Masefield makes much of the Anzacs' reluctance to leave, their determination to finish the task they have started. As the Anzacs depart, the battlegrounds become sites for nostalgia: "No man of all that force passed down those trenches, the scenes of so much misery and pain and joy and valour and devoted brotherhood, without a

deep feeling of sadness" (73). There is a concerted effort here to remember Anzac as a particular kind of glorious defeat. It was won "at such cost in the ever-glorious charge on the 25th", held with pain, and "built with such sweat and toil and anguish" (73). Officers and men had known hope and fervour, "all the glorious resolve" and "all the bitterness and disappointment of the unhelped attempt" (73). Among these veterans, the desire to remain is deeply felt. In this way then, Masfield can justifiably write about a triumphant Anzac spirit: "They had lost no honour. They were not to blame that they were creeping off like thieves in the night" (73). In terms of future Australian imaginings of the event, the mythologising of Gallipoli as a sacred marker of identity, it is crucial that the soldiers' withdrawal from Turkey cannot be read as defeat. Any blame or guilt that can be apportioned must rest squarely with nameless, faceless "others": "Had others (not of their profession), many hundreds of miles away, but been as they, as generous, as wise, as far-seeing, as full of sacrifice, those thinned companies, with the look of pain in their faces, and the mud of the hills thick upon their bodies, would have given thanks in Santa Sophia three months before" (74). Though they have failed to take Gallipoli, the magnitude of what they have achieved is without equal. Readers are reminded that "they had fought a battle such as has never been seen upon this earth" (74). Finally, the genesis of the legend is cemented in a celebration of their glorious, heroic deeds: "They went up at the call of duty, with a bright banner of a battle-cry, against an impregnable fort. Without guns, without munitions, without help, and without water to drink, they climbed the scarp, and held it by their own glorious manhood, quickened by a word from their chief" (74).

In *The Victorian Readers Seventh Book* the poem "Anzac Day" immediately follows the Masfield extract. Written by Miss Doris Kerr under the name of Capel Boake and published in the *Australasian*, this poem is concerned with memory and sacredness, invoking powerful referents of the battles of the First World War. It opens with images that suggest the passing of seasons, the movement of time, scarlet poppies that burn again, the "bitter almond" shedding its leaves. Despite the time that has passed however, the Anzacs are remembered. Even though the earth has healed her

wounds “where Turk and Christian met”, their memory is sacred, imbued with a religious significance (74). “And stark against an alien sky/ The cross of Christ is set” (74). Indeed, in the next stanza, a longer Christian history is invoked. “From north and south and east and west,/ With eager eyes aflame,/ With heads erect and laughing lips/ The young Crusaders came” (75). Gallipoli itself, therefore, is incorporated in a spiritual tradition. In this poem then, we can trace Benedict Anderson’s alignment of the religious and the secular in the imagined community, the nation (where the idea of nation both grows out of, and in opposition to, sacral culture)(12). As well as a selection of language that references a Christian and religious community, the poem is equally concerned with a religious tradition in its engagement with the mysteries of re-generation, youthfulness and death: “O sacred land, Gallipoli!/ Home of our youthful dead” (75). But more than this, Kerr invokes continuity and connectedness in the children’s presence in the space of Anzac absence: “The toiling peasant turns to pray,/ Calling upon his God,/ And little children laugh and play/ Where once their footsteps trod” (75). Even commentators on the making of the Anzac legend and its significance for national identity and culture turn to the language of religion: “Yet if the bush and Anzac are not faiths which explain our purpose on earth, they can teach that how we live matters. Man may be frail, but his example can inspire his fellows, and set standards and ideals for them to follow. For while individuals must suffer doubt and travail all their days, those who conduct themselves well pass on a torch to all the generations, showing the human spirit shining unquenchable, forever” (Gammage 66). Similarly to the legend itself, and Gammage’s invocation of its sacredness and moral value, the purpose and organising structure of the poem is to perform its memory work. Naturally then, it ends with the memorial: “Yet, on this day when first they died,/ Turn back the troubled years;/ Pause in the press of life awhile;/ Give them again – our tears” (75).

The memory of landscape is also explored in the poem entitled “At Anzac” reproduced in *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*. The poem is an abridged version of Leon Gellert’s “The Last to Leave” from *Songs of a Campaign*. In it, the

poet sorrowfully watches the place “where they had scaled the height,/ The height whereon they bled so bitterly” (84). As well as looking for physical reminders of the Anzac legend, markers on the landscape, the poet listens to memories. The landscape remembers:

I heard the epics of a thousand trees,
A thousand waves I heard; and then I knew
The waves were very old, the trees were wise:
The dead would be remembered evermore –
The valiant dead that gazed upon the skies
And slept in great battalions by the shore. (84)

Mildred Huxley’s “Greater Than We Knew” from London’s *Contemporary Review*, also in *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*, also celebrates the way in which the war dead are remembered by the earth, even in foreign soil. These men need no dirge because springtime brings tributes to them: “The music of the daffodils/ Shall be a soldier’s requiem/ Among a thousand hills” (85). These golden trumpets will blow mournfully for “the golden youth that’s fled”, for the dead men who lie “beneath an alien sky” (85). Yet, as is a consistent coding in poems and stories about the Great War in school Readers, there is also a persistent note of victoriousness and hope. As well as mourning the dead, the poet instructs the trumpets to “blow triumphant music, too” (85). In this poem, the triumph is due to an imperialist notion of the loyalty of colonial soldiers and the mother country’s greatness. “Because the heart of youth was true,/ Because our Britain proved to be/ E’en greater than we knew” (85). Highlighting again a Reader metanarrative preoccupation with race, Britain’s greatness is founded upon a crimson thread of kinship. Importantly too, the British race does not stagnate in the colonies but rather, is strengthened and glorified.

Another poem immediately follows Huxley’s work in *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*. It is an abridged version of Laurence Binyon’s “To the Fallen” from *The Times* of London. “To the Fallen” opens with a repetitive and powerful image of human courage during times of war. As in John Masefield’s “The Landing of the

Anzacs", Binyon's soldiers "went with songs to the battle" (85). Just as importantly, they do not flinch in the face of death, they are fearless and brave: "They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,/ They fell with their faces to the foe" (85). The next stanza of this poem is a well-known and well-loved institution at Anzac Day services around Australia. Its evocation of youth, death and memory draws again on the spiritual, the certainty of an after-life:

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,
We will remember them. (85)

"To the Fallen" suggests that the memory of dead soldiers is central to nation, and that the stories of these men are *known*, shared and celebrated. Here the poem recognises the sacredness attributed to the fallen soldier in imagining a national community. "To the innermost heart of their land, they are known/ As the stars are known to the night" (86). In this vein, Anderson writes of the ceremonial reverence accorded war memorials: "No more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers" (9). Importantly too is the poem's coding of time, the passing and recording of time, and the religious significance of death and re-birth.

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain. (86)

Finally, *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book* also contains an excerpt from *In Your Hands, Australians* by C. E. W. Bean, noted myth-maker of Gallipoli (and the war's official historian for Australia). This passage, entitled "The Legacy", is, as the title suggests, an entreaty to the youth of Australia to carry on a glorious future as won by their forefathers. Directly addressed to young people, "The Legacy" draws heavily on emotive language and imagery to ensure its appropriate reception: "They gave it into your hands, Australians [...] Australia lies in your hands now,

where those men, dying, laid her" (87). Pre-empting the reader's potential cynicism, Bean insists this is not "mere fancy" but rather, "it is the simple, splendid truth" (87). According to Bean, the youth of Australia are faced with a considerable task, a task begun by the Australian Force in France and at Anzac. It is the responsibility of future Australians to make Australia the greatest and best country in the world because that is what the Australian Force fought for and what they believed. Bean emphasises the tragic loss of 60,000 young men in the war. In this way, he reminds his readership of the cultural legacy of the war dead. Reminiscent of the view of the nation symbolised by a young man in a young land, Bean writes: "In the midst of the work which they began so grandly, they were cut off – the very best men our young country had, those that we could so ill spare – the sort of men of whom this vast Australia, with its tiny population, wanted all that it could possibly get. And it lost them when their work was only begun. Who is there to go on with their work?" (87). The passage ends with a direct appeal to the boys and girls of Australia. Its appeal to the editors of the Victorian school Readers seems obvious: "Who is going to make of it the country they wished to see? It is you – the younger Australians – even the boys and girls of Australia. You, or no one" (88).

It is fitting to end here with Bean's entreaty to the future generation of Australians. Ideas about citizenship are, after all, central to the stories of national identity and national development that appear throughout School Readers. To some extent, it might be argued that School Readers are informed by a theory of citizenship where textbooks, and more broadly, the educational apparatus, are means of conceptualising and defining an imagined political community. Indeed, in Victoria, in 1909, the Minister for Public Instruction observes, "the Department possesses a powerful means of producing educative effect in any desired direction" (qtd in Musgrave 1). Here the Minister refers to the centralised control of reading material in schools. Regardless of the success or otherwise of this desired "educative effect", what is clear from this study is that there do exist in school Readers ideals of Australianness. What is also clear, however, is that these ideals, drawn from a range

of literature over an extended period of time, are crucially informed by the promulgation of a very particular story of national growth.

Notes:

¹ Roderic Quinn (1867-1949) was born in Sydney. As well as a brief period studying law and working as a teacher, Quinn was a freelance journalist. This poem was first published in the *Bulletin*, vol. 25, no. 1260, 7 April 1904 (3).

² George Essex Evans (1863-1909) was born in London and arrived in Australia in 1881. He worked as a farmer, teacher, and journalist and in the public service. This poem first appeared in a volume of poetry entitled *The Secret Key and Other Verses* in 1906.

³ A conservative historian perhaps, John Hirst nevertheless recognises the multiplicities inherent in the pioneering legend, as well as the range of stories circulating around such a figure (Hirst, as I have noted, makes a special note of education's role in reproducing the purest form of the legend). Meanwhile, in her critiques, cultural historian Ann Curthoys has argued more comprehensively for an awareness of the narrativisation of history and its political effects. In a sustained feminist criticism of the legend, literary critics such as Kay Schaffer have drawn attention to the legend's masculinist locus of power (simultaneously arguing for women's resistance, such as in Barbara Baynton's short stories, for example).

⁴ Perhaps another example of how the Exodus narrative informs Australian historical mythologies is Will Ogilvie's poem "The Plough" published in *The Victorian Readers Seventh Book*. In this poem the plough is traced from its origins in Egypt through to its appearance during Roman times and then onto its use throughout the British Empire (England, America and Canada) before it finally appears again beneath the "sun of the Southland" where "I painted her rich plains golden, and taught her to sow and reap" (35). Finally, the poem returns to Egypt: "From Egypt, behind my oxen with stately step and slow, I have carried your weightiest burden, ye toilers that reap and sow!" (35).

⁵ According to *AustLit* records Frank Hudson appears to have lived in Australia around 1907 and 1908, and published poetry in the *Bulletin*. "Pioneers" first appeared in *The Song of the Manly Men and Other Verses*, published in 1908 in London by David Nutt (37-38).

⁶ Edward Dyson (1865-1931) was born near Ballarat, Victoria, and grew up "familiar with life both in the bush and on the diggings" (*Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* 230). He was a miner in Victoria and Tasmania before becoming a writer. This poem is taken from Dyson's collection of verse, *Rhymes from the Mines and Other Lines* (1896).

⁷ Clarence Michael James Dennis was born in South Australia in 1876. Author of *Songs of a Sentimental Bloke*, Dennis died in 1938. "The Year Around in Timber-Land" first appeared in 1915 in *Melba's Gift Book of Australian Art and Literature* edited by Franklin Peterson (53-57).

⁸ While it is important to situate authors such as Paterson in relation to cultural movements attributed to their writings, it is not my intention here to trace more fully the development of "nationalism" in Australia. Clearly, this is beyond the scope of this project and its concern with texts as they are produced specifically as "nationalist" metanarrative signs in school Readers. For a fuller discussion of 1890s cultural life, see John Docker's *The Nervous Nineties* (1991). Docker argues against a totalising approach to this period in Australian history, and while he attests to a vigorous literary community and culture, such a community did *not* stand for "the nationalist assertion of a single cultural identity or set of 'Australianist' values" (238). For the purposes of this chapter though, I think it is fair to say that national culture was a predominant concern of this period. More importantly, whatever a writer's

original intention, certain kinds of poems and stories can nevertheless be co-opted into a “nationalist” legend.

⁹ This poem was first published in the *Bulletin*, vol. 10, no. 514, 21 December 1889 (17).

¹⁰ This poem was first published in the *Town and Country Journal*, vol. 39, no. 1000, 9 March 1889 (31).

¹¹ Born in New South Wales, Henry Kendall (1839-1882) is regarded as one of Australia’s most important poets of the colonial period. “Song of the Shingle-Splitters” was first published in the *Australian Town and Country Journal*, vol. 9, no. 226, 2 May 1874 (705).

¹² “The Drover’s Wife” first appeared in the *Bulletin* in 1892.

¹³ “The Women of the West” was first published in 1906 in *The Secret Key and Other Verses*.

¹⁴ This is a reference to the enlistment of Australians during the Boer War in South Africa (1899-1902). This reference is an important prefiguring of the Anzac legend in which Australian mothers “gave up” their sons, and the sons of the nation, in a momentous sacrifice for nation and Empire.

¹⁵ Given that the first edition of the Queensland Readers and the New Australian School Series (NSW) were published prior to and during the time of the First World War, it is not surprising that these series do not produce versions of the Anzac legend. While the *Western Australian Reader Book VI* reproduces John McCrae’s poem of the battle of Ypres “In Flanders’ Fields”, it does not include any Gallipoli texts. Anzac stories and poems do not appear in the Adelaide Readers Fifth Book but as I have been unable to consult the first edition Sixth Book I cannot be sure as to whether such texts were published – one would imagine they might have been given that the Adelaide Readers were published in the mid to late 1920s.

“A Picture That Enshrines A Complete Record of Our Life And Land”: Visual Effects of A Maturing Australian Imagination

In school Readers, the imagining of the Australian nation is also about its imaging. As such, in an examination of school textbooks, the visual text should not be dismissed as merely secondary to the written stories, poems, essays or plays. The frontispieces, illustrations and photographs selected for inclusion in school reading series provide an illustrative grammar to assist in the reading of an Australian story. Images in the Readers are essential to picturing a metanarrative of national growth. Such a narrative projects and reflects those encoded and encoding themes of development inscribed by the written text. This chapter explores how a story of nation operates through the visual in school Readers. It considers the visual effects of a maturing Australian imagination with specific reference to those thematic concerns and codings already identified in previous chapters, especially ideas about children and childhood, images of England and Empire, the various manifestations of an Australian legend, as well as representations of Aboriginal peoples, and how such depictions are employed in the visual enactment of white indigeneity. In this way, it is possible to uncover the links between imagining and imaging, and more especially, how illusions of identity are produced in school Readers. This notion of

production is particularly instructive here, where local artists were often commissioned specifically to illustrate school Readers, or where existing paintings and photographs were selectively co-opted into a story of national growth.

As an introduction to an examination of how codings of national growth are embedded in the visual in School Readers, I want now to return to the centrality of the child as metonym for a fledgling Australian nation. The sacredness associated with the figure of the child, in Western thinking more broadly, and in school Readers particularly, circulates around the child figure's *naturalised* innocence. In a Reader metanarrative the child is constrained by the heavy weight and responsibility of nationalistic symbolism inscribed on his or her body (in text). The child is imagined to represent a nation in both written and visual narratives. And in both forms, the child is contradictorily asked to embody innocence and knowledge, uncertainty and self-assurance. Here I want to focus on the visual grammar of the child figure, how we *see*, picture and read the child as a metanarrative sign in the illustrations selected for school Readers.

Picturing the child, picturing the nation

The reinvented and reinscribed child of nation is represented powerfully in an image reproduced as the frontispiece of *The Victorian Readers Second Book* - a painting entitled *The Age of Innocence* by English artist Sir Joshua Reynolds (Figure 1). As Anne Higgonet attests, "it was paintings like *The Age of Innocence* that captured the modern western visual imagination and became the foundation of what we assume childhood looks like" (23). The child's fragility, her translucent skin and her seemingly naive ignorance of a viewer all contribute to the ideas about children, childhood and innocence that pervade this image. The child dominates the frame. But while she is prominent in the foreground, the trees, land, sky and clouds serve to emphasise her miniaturised child status. She is vulnerable at the same time as she is so powerfully central. Her hands are crossed protectively across her chest, allowing her this vulnerability and innocence, despite her naturalness, the confidence with which she dominates the scene. This naturalness (or knowingness)



Figure 1: "The Age of Innocence" *The Victorian Readers Second Book*

is borne out by the tiny toes directed toward the viewer. Indeed, as Higgonet writes, “the child belongs so comfortably in nature that she doesn’t need shoes” (15). Interestingly, the date attributed to this art work, 1788, coincides with the arrival of the English First Fleet, the beginning of a white colonial history in Australia. Curthoys makes clear the connection between claims for innocence and a particular version of this history: “The common-sense understanding of the historians and the society at large was that Australian history began with European early visitors and then the establishment of a British settlement at Sydney Cove [...] The ‘slaughter’ [massacres of Aboriginal people by settlers] written about by Melville, West, and Rusden gradually faded from public consciousness, written histories, and school texts” (“Expulsion, Exodus and Exile” 14). So, while the Australian nation could hardly claim to be innocent (having a dark history of denying, disenfranchising and murdering its own indigenous peoples) it could usefully identify itself as childlike in its status as colonial outpost of the British Empire. The significance of the *Age of Innocence* then is twofold. It suggests a young and blameless Australia in its characterisation of unblemished childhood innocence.

This kind of (im)perfect innocence, an imagined state already corrupted in its ambivalent literary and visual constructions, shares with lost children narratives the same kind of problematic ideological operations. Jane Duff, for instance, is both innocent and at the same time, imbued with anxieties about sexuality and both the protection, and transgression, of a bodily innocence (evidenced in the emphasis upon her undressing to provide garments with which to cover her younger brother for example). As metanarrative signs, illustrations of lost children all employ visual markers of the child’s vulnerability and innocence, where the land and nature (as metaphor for native), threaten to consume the child, and concomitantly, what the child ideally represents as a white indigene – an unblemished national past and future. An encroaching wilderness and its connotations of lost innocence are central to constructions of lost children images. In concert with the written descriptions of an inviting but deeply hostile natural environment, the illustrations play upon settler tropes of proximity and consumption in quite explicit ways. In *The Victorian*

Readers Fourth Book, Tom Carter's drawing of the Duff children lost in the bush emphasises nature's immensity and the children's relative powerlessness (Figure 2). As framing devices, the largest trees on either side of the illustration draw the viewer's eye into the image, focussing attention on the children at its centre. The bush figuratively encloses them. The canopy overhead, the trees at the side and the rotting log in the foreground encircle the children completely. The interaction between the children in this scene, and the relationship between these figures and the landscape, are particularly significant. His head slightly cocked to one side, hand cupped against his ear and axe at the ready, the oldest child Isaac is wary and watchful. The youngest child Frank clearly demonstrates the children's fearfulness. Holding Jane's hand, he looks up at his sister for guidance and reassurance. While Jane and Isaac are moving toward the foreground, Frank appears less certain. While their knees are bent and their feet appear caught in the act of stepping forward, Frank is at a standstill, one arm reaching back into the space from which they have apparently just exited. In this sense, this illustration represents the contradictoriness of the lost child topos, where the naïve and innocent child is always driven by a desire to know (usually to know the landscape beyond the childhood boundaries of the home). Where the landscape can be read according to the cost of a repressed Aboriginal story of attempted genocide, stories of incorporation, as Lawson observes, "function as cautionary tales for women and children who might think of straying 'out of place'" (1220). In this sense, the drawing of the children physically trapped in nature (where long, forked and naked branches stretch out across their path to actually transect the figures of Jane and Frank) reveals the danger of attempting to move beyond the safe environs of a "known" story of Australian settlement and growth. And again highlighting Jane's symbolic significance to this story, especially "Lost in the Bush" as exemplum, Jane is the central figure of Carter's illustration.

Settler narrative tropes inform the picturing of Australia just as they inform those written versions of nation already explored here. Illustrations of lost children, like the narrative tradition, are influenced by references to landscape as much as they



Figure 2: “Lost in the Bush” *The Victorian Readers Fourth Book*

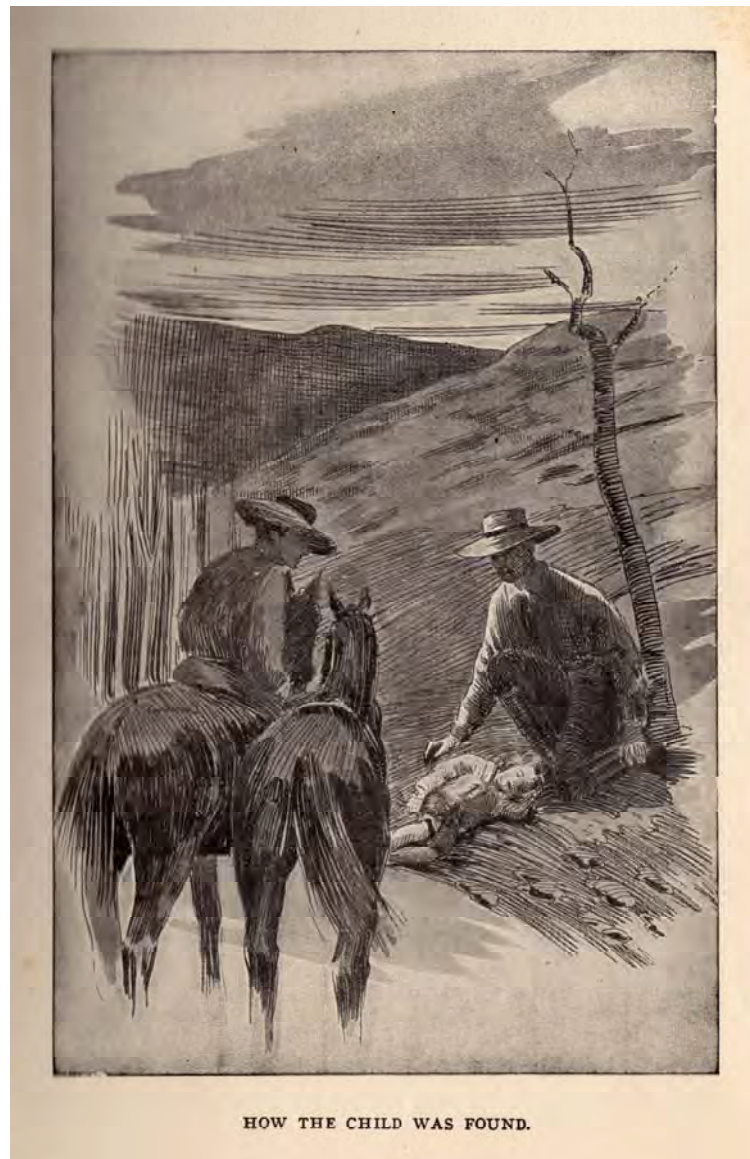


Figure 3: "How the Child Was Found" *Queensland School Readers Book V*



Figure 4: "Pretty Dick" *The New Australian School Series Fourth Reader*



Figure 5: "Pretty Dick" *The Adelaide Readers Book V, The Tasmanian Readers Grade V*

are concerned with the portrayal of a childhood innocence. Indeed, the image of the child abandoned *in* and *by* the Australian landscape (the cannibalising landscape) serves to reconcile both purposes. In the *Queensland School Readers Book V*, an illustration accompanying “How the Child was Found” (from Henry Kingsley’s *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn*) highlights the landscape’s seeming indifference to the lost child’s plight (Figure 3). This image, unattributed to an illustrator, reveals a barren and lonely wilderness where a dead child lies beneath a dead tree. The landscape is secondary to the action depicted in this scene, and as such, it is presented as distant, uncaring, and even hostile. In contrast, the human element is central. The viewer’s eye is drawn along a line that highlights the pathos of (and the warning inherent in) the tableaux. The man and horses on the left direct us toward the child lying on the ground in a sleep-like posture. The child’s face is turned toward the viewer. Meanwhile another man crouches over the child. There is symmetry in the two men either side of the child, both faces slightly concealed beneath broad-brimmed hats, each dipped toward the figure at their centre. Leaning over the child, these men both protect the innocent and frame the terrible moment of his discovery. It is another instance of the contradictoriness of the lost child topos. While discovery is the illustration’s focus, the setting is nevertheless a key element in constructing the “sign” of the lost child as a central coding within a story of nation. Behind the boy and his “rescuer”, the dead tree draws the eye upward and out into the wilderness itself. It is the emptiness “out there”, the fear of the consumptive power of the landscape and all it represents that is the end point of the viewer’s experience of this illustration. And it is this anxiety that informs our understanding of the image.

A very similar imaging of the lost child appears in *The New Australian School Series Fourth Book* (New South Wales) (Figure 4). Accompanying Marcus Clarke’s story “Pretty Dick”, G. W. Lambert’s illustration focuses on the moment of discovery, where the child is found dead in the midst of a hostile natural environment. Nature’s malevolence is evidenced in the flock of crows circling nearby. In Lambert’s drawing Pretty Dick appears at the bottom left of the frame, his face

hidden from view as he lies face down, his head resting on his arm. It is Dick's father who dominates the image. His fists are clenched and his face is upturned as though appealing to a higher power as he kneels above his son. The father's hat lying discarded in the long grass points to his haste and desperation in reaching the boy.

Meanwhile, in the background, alongside two grazing horses, another figure respectfully turns away from this display of grief. The open space in which the scene is depicted, similar to the open hillsides of the previous illustration in the *Queensland Reader*, is in stark contrast to the claustrophobic bush depicted in the drawing of the Duff children. Yet landscape is central to each – it seduces the children, drawing them away from their families and into the wilderness, and ultimately, it betrays them. In each of these illustrations our national anxieties are revealed (just as they are expounded in the written text of the stories). These anxieties are about Australia's claim to a child-like innocence in relation to the discovery and settlement of the country, and anxieties about the unknown, uncivilised nature of the landscape and its unquenchable appetite (especially where land is a metaphor for "native").

In the fifth books of both the *Adelaide* and *Tasmanian Readers*, J. Macfarlane's illustration of Pretty Dick reveals anxiousness about the construction of childhood itself (Figure 5). In the centre of the illustration, Pretty Dick lies as though asleep. He looks peaceful, his arms are outstretched and his head rests on one of his arms. He could be asleep. Macfarlane's illustration, however, includes another significant element to ensure a particular reading of this death of a child. Above Pretty Dick's head are two crows, each flying in separate directions as though circling overhead. The appearance of these crows, like the cries of the curlews in both "Lost in the Bush" and "The Chosen Vessel" signals to the reader an undercurrent of malice and threat. The birds overhead, just as they occur symbolically in the written texts, suggest a loss of innocence. In this way, stories of lost children reveal anxieties about white encroachment on Aboriginal land. Innocence cannot be maintained in

the face of the evidence of the white child's death. The crows, metonymically standing in for Aboriginal peoples and the land/nature itself, witness this death of innocence. While they might not be called upon to present the evidence, it is enough that it has been witnessed (and this threatens to destroy the tenuous hold white Australia has on its bloodless settler history). In a number of respects then, this singular image of Dick's demise serves to disrupt a nation's imagining of self in school Readers and throughout their metanarrative. While the written stories of bush-lost children hint toward these same settler anxieties and the same kind of affect, the obfuscatory work of language and narrative seek to suppress the unsettling impact of alternative histories. The stories' illustrations, however, in their starkness and the simple contrast of line and black and white, actually bring to the surface those anxieties that underpin a metanarrative of national growth, the white child's ruin. These illustrations, even as they appear across school Readers, do not easily accommodate superficial readings of the meanings of those texts they accompany.

Images of Empire

While the figure or image of the child is an integral element to national imaginings of origin, there are other modes in which school Readers picture the opening chapter of a story of national growth. While illustrations of bush-lost children reveal symptoms of ambivalence and uncertainty, those images of Empire selected for school Readers (in contrast) offer very little ideological room in which to manoeuvre. Here an implied mother-child relationship between England and Australia reinforces a simpler reading of the Australian nation as child-like, the youthful inheritor of greater, wiser traditions; part of the glorious British Empire. Although a school Reader metanarrative is informed by a keen desire to forge a proud national history, this does not necessarily preclude loyalty to the Empire, and at its core, indebtedness to England as motherland. After all, without the appearance of England and Empire, a white Australia could not seek to construct its preferred story of discovery, settlement and development.

For visual evidence of Australia's relationship with the mother and the significance of this relationship in imagining the nation, it is worthwhile to note again the Victorian Reader frontispiece reproduction of Sir Joshua Reynolds's *The Age of Innocence*. This image represents the child as a symbol for innocence, and equally, a potent sign of the child-like, youthful Australian nation. Importantly too, *The Age of Innocence* is concerned with a depiction of Englishness, and in its re-presentation, it ties the nation inextricably to the mother. Similarly, the frontispiece of *The Queensland School Readers Book VI*, Alphonse de Neuville's 1880 painting *The Defence of Rorke's Drift* (Figure 6), reveals a mother-child connectedness in its function as metanarrative sign. Some discussion of this painting, and more especially, its acquisition for an Australian audience, is necessary to understanding how it might have come to be selected for reproduction in a Queensland Reader published in 1913.

The Defence of Rorke's Drift depicts a scene from the Zulu War when, in 1879, a vastly outnumbered group of eighty British soldiers successfully defended a store and hospital in Southern Africa against three or four thousand Zulu warriors. This battle, though it had little military significance, became famous throughout the British Empire as a story of courage in the face of great odds. Indeed, eleven Victoria crosses were awarded to men who were amongst the survivors. It is a dramatic scene, focusing primarily on the evacuation of the wounded from the burning hospital. While men are being carried out of the hospital to the left of the frame, the British soldiers on the right are depicted in a desperate fight with the Zulu attackers, their superior rifles in sharp contrast with the Zulu spears and shields. Though the importance of this work to English audiences seems clear (about 50,000 people paid to see it as it toured that country), it also had great significance for other parts of the Empire where the fortunes of Britain were seen to reflect the fortunes of her colonies. Similar to many of the stories and poems considered in chapter 2 of this thesis, "The Imperial Curriculum", this painting (and its significance in the Australian colonies) reflects what has already been described as the *dual* imperial-colonial identity, where one is not exclusive of the other. This much is evident in



Figure 6: "The Defence of Rorke's Drift" *Queensland School Readers Book VI*

that the trustees of the Art Gallery of New South Wales paid what was then an exorbitant amount of money to acquire the painting in 1881. As Craig Wilcox argues in his lecture about the painting and its significance for Australian audiences, wars fought in other parts of the British Empire in the nineteenth century were also Australia's wars: "Prosperity and confidence in Australia were shaped partly by the course of those wars – by how expensive they were, by how long they took, by how successful the result was, by the stories of bravery and disaster they yielded" (4).

The Australian colonies inherited, and indeed (according to school Readers at least) revered a British military heritage. As such, the seemingly impossible defence of Rorke's Drift was immortalised here just as it was in the motherland. In the *Queensland School Readers Book VI*, published before the First World War, the battle stood for those qualities and values later associated with Gallipoli and Anzac. Rorke's Drift still had cultural currency in Australia a month before the First World War began, when, as Wilcox notes, a football match between England and Australia was dubbed the Rorke's Drift test because England played on and won despite being reduced by injuries to three fewer players (4). Moreover, in the New South Wales Art Gallery souvenir album of 1915, sold three months after the landing at Gallipoli to raise funds for wounded soldiers, *The Defence of Rorke's Drift* appears as the first reproduction: "By then, Australians had indigenised this painting, if you like, making it their own window into their British past and into the kind of war they were now fighting" (Wilcox 5).¹ The painting appears in school Readers precisely because it refers to a brave British heritage later adopted as part of the nation's own imaginary.

The connection between the new Australian nation and its British roots is equally evident in the frontispiece of the fifth book of the Queensland reading series, a reproduction of Charles Nuttall's 1902 painting *The opening of the first Federal Parliament, 9 May 1901* (Figure 7). The painting, commissioned to provide a visual record of the moment at which the Australian nation was created, is therefore a particularly important instance in a story of national growth. Nuttall is clearly concerned with imparting the event's foundational significance (even as, culturally, it has not been celebrated in the manner of the landing of the First Fleet or the landing at Gallipoli, where both events are commemorated with public holidays).

The sheer scale of the painting, more than four metres long, and the fact that it includes 344 recognisable portraits of local and international dignitaries who were present at the event are evidence of Nuttall's visions of the grandeur and status deserved by the event. Yet, even as the painting is included as a school Reader frontispiece, the moment of Federation is overshadowed by less formal moments or signs of a story of national growth. There are very few texts across Australian school reading series that deal specifically with Federation, and interestingly, in the state in which opposition to Federation was so vehement and whose school Readers are the most regionalist, Queensland, is also the state in which the moment of Australia's federated beginnings is made most explicit. Of the painting itself, it is important to note the emphasis upon H. R. H. The Duke of Cornwall and York (later King George V). As British figurehead responsible for opening the parliament, he embodies England's parental role. Paintings by both Nuttall and Tom Roberts reflect this, positioning the Duke at the forefront of the scene. Further underscoring this parent-child relationship are photographs of Parliament buildings included across the Victorian School Readers. Insisting on the centrality of London to a colonial identity, even as London was anything but central in a strictly geographical sense, reveals the often competing, though apparently reconcilable, demands of creating a national story within an imperial context. In the *Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*, a photographic image of London's Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament is captioned "At the Heart of the Empire" (Figure 8). Even more overtly however, the line underneath the Houses of Parliament reads "The home of 'the Mother of Parliaments'", literally according England her parental status. Scattered throughout the Readers are other photographs of Australian Parliament houses, as though to demonstrate the nation's coming of age in terms of its constitutional maturity, as well as directly referring back to the system on which it is based, England's system of Government. In the opening pages of the sixth Victorian Reader then, there is a photograph of Parliament House in Melbourne, while in the seventh book there



Figure 7: "Opening of the First Federal Parliament of Australia, 9 May 1901",
Queensland School Readers Book V

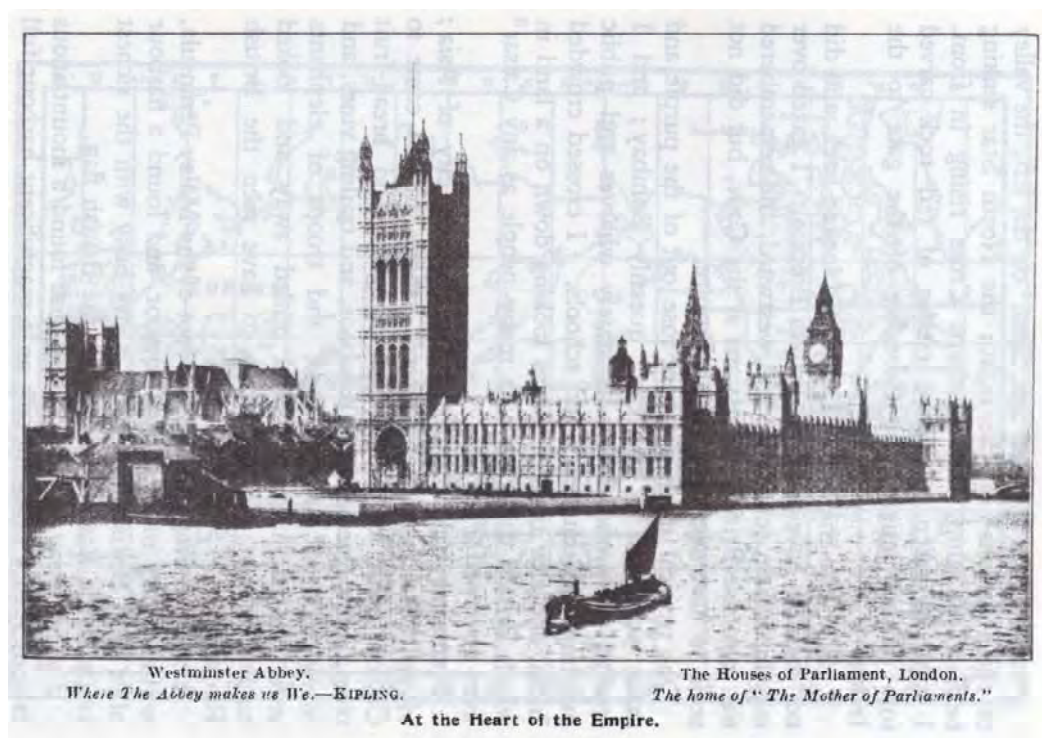


Figure 8: "At the Heart of the Empire" *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*



Figure 9: "The Shakespeare Memorial" *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*

is a picture of the Commonwealth Houses of Parliament, Canberra. In the Victorian series' eighth book, following the title pages, there is a photograph of Australia House, London, containing the office of the High Commissioner for Australia and the Agents-General for Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania. Demonstrating that these kinds of images are not unique to the Victorian reading series, in the fifth book of the Queensland Readers, Brisbane's Parliament House is pictured. Clearly, these images are intended to demonstrate to students the ties that bind Australia to England. Arguments about imperial insecurities (and the need to bolster the Empire and its image) seem to be borne out in these photographic school Reader evidences.

In a similar way, a photograph of "The Shakespeare Memorial" in Sydney (in *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*) emphasises links between the young Australian nation and its cultural heritage (Figure 9). The British influence upon, and connection with, contemporary Australian life is celebrated in school Readers as part of a metanarrative of national growth. Images of British ships, British wars, British explorers and British heroes are scattered throughout the Readers. Photographs and illustrations reaffirm a story in which Australia was discovered, settled and civilised by the British people, as well as being informed politically and culturally by great and proven English traditions (as part of the glorious British Empire). As McLean writes: "Veiled by the rhetoric of empire, memories of a blighted birth were cunningly repressed in the mythology of an immaculate conception" ("Picturing Australia" 57). Such national beginnings set the stage for the birth of a proud and independent nation, and the birth of an Australian legend (in all its guises and permutations).

Recognising a national legend

If school Readers can be read for their metanarrative of national growth, the frontispiece of the third book of the Victorian Readers encapsulates just such an argument. This image, a photographic reproduction of Danish sculptor Kondrup's memorial to Hans Christian Anderson, is captioned "Once upon a time – " (Figure



Figure 10: "Once Upon a Time—" *The Victorian Readers Third Book*

10). While it is perhaps not quite what the editors had in mind, this image is symbolic of the constructed history or national mythology produced in and through those written and visual texts selected for publication in school Readers. Indeed, history or notions of Australian culture and identity, as a collection of stories, and as constructed “truths”, are just as fragile and uncertain as Hans Christian Anderson’s fairy tales. In the sculpture, the child in the arms of the storyteller leans back against his knee, enthralled and compliant. The Readers as meaning makers act in much the same way as the more powerful and authoritative storyteller of this image. Whether or not the child believes the fairy tales is irrelevant – what is important is that the Readers as “technologies of education” (where the school text book and the stories it contains speak with authority and truth) can be read to uncover or make explicit cultural imaginings and how such imaginings point to themes of national growth. So far, in exploring the visual effects of a national imaginary in school Readers, I’ve identified the thematic significance or codings of innocent and child-like national origins that are reinforced by Australia’s ongoing preoccupation with England as the motherland. Yet, in a story of nation, there has to be a point at which the nation is seen to “grow up”. In the Reader’s metanarrative of national growth, this is not so much a singular moment in time as a collection of written and visual texts that represent the kind of national legend that can be read as signifying an Australian coming of age (where the relative obscurity of Nuttall’s painting compared with the iconic images of the “Heidelberg School” is a case in point).

Recognising an Australian legend is made possible through pictures just as it is encoded in literature. In the previous chapter, in identifying works by Henry Lawson, Banjo Paterson and others as broadly “nationalist”, I was careful to point out that such a categorisation could become rather restrictive in its totalising and even erroneous approach. Similarly, while there are a number of illustrations in the Readers that fall largely within this “nationalist” category, they are nuanced and individualistic even as they are thematically driven. As I’ve argued, the Australian legend as it is embodied in school Readers is not in any sense a unified or a singular construction. It is recognisable in a variety of forms. Yet even though there are many

aspects of the legend, and even as they can be employed quite differently, the purpose of these texts as they can be read across school reading series is to create a sense of a developing national identity. (Of course, it is important to note that there may not be an inherently nationalistic purpose to the text – it may not be written or drawn in order to embody or reinscribe a national imaginary or legend – but that, in its selection for the Readers, the text becomes part of the Readers’ metanarrative of national growth.) Similarly to how the *Bulletin* tradition and writers such as Lawson and Paterson have become synonymous with a perceived nationalist agenda, paintings by those artists associated with the Heidelberg School have been likewise deployed. In depicting an Australian legend then, the upper grade levels of the Victorian school Readers are all opened with reproductions of works by painters associated with the so-called Australian Impressionist movement. In this way, the images serve a dual function. They refer directly to the Readers’ themes of national growth in the subject matter of the paintings themselves, while at another level, these art works refer to a carefully constructed tradition in Australia where such artists have been identified as the first to have perceived and painted the “real Australia”. In his article “Picturing Australia: The Impressionist Swindle”, McLean explains the “legend” implicit in the Australian Impressionist movement itself: “The story of Australian Impressionism remains one of the most compelling and sustaining myths of the Australian identity. The view that Impressionism pictures the birth of a new nation, and so offered a redeeming vision, was originally the idea of the Impressionists themselves” (“Picturing Australia” 56). Naturally, such a mythology is promoted in Victorian school Readers that were, after all, published after the First World War when symbols of the new nation were paramount and individual paintings by the Australian Impressionists could be appropriated as units in developmental stories. That the Heidelberg School remains one of Australia’s most attractive cultural myths is supported by Ann Galbally in her observation: “The popular view of the Heidelberg School is that Streeton, McCubbin, Roberts, Conder and Withers were the first artists to see and paint the ‘real’ Australian landscape [...] It was [however] an interpretation of art history born of the first world war: in its aftermath, when Australian art history first began

to be written, writers were tempted to look across the chasm created by the war at the period that had gone before and to see the decades of the 1880s and 1890s as a golden age – a time of pure, unsullied Australian nationalism” (9).

In *The Victorian Readers Fourth Book* then, *Travelling Sheep* by Walter Withers appears as the frontispiece (Figure 11), while in the fifth book the frontispiece is a work by Sir John Longstaff, *Gippsland, Sunday Night, February 20th, 1898* (Figure 12). *Shearing the Rams*, arguably one of Australia’s best-known paintings, is reproduced as the frontispiece of the sixth book (Figure 13). The artist of this work, Tom Roberts, is a central figure of the Heidelberg School. While Withers is associated with the plein air artists’ camps of the same period, and although Longstaff was also an influential figure during this time, Roberts and his works are more firmly rooted in the national imaginary. Along with Roberts, Frederick McCubbin (or “the Prof” as he was known in the Heidelberg circle), is immediately recognisable as one of that band of artist heroes who captured the essence of Australian life in their painting. His famous work *The Pioneers* appears as the frontispiece of the eighth book (Figure 15) while another painting by Longstaff, *Breaking the News* (Figure 14), is reproduced as the seventh book frontispiece. All of these works, particularly in the way in which they are presented in the Readers, belong to a tradition in which they are retrospectively read as accurately conveying the unique Australian light, the colours of the bush and the character of the people settling and transforming the land. The works are included in the Readers precisely because they have been read, categorised and reproduced as such. In her study of picturing a national imaginary, Willis makes an important point about the relationship between settler anxiety and occupation that I have already argued in relation to literary texts as they act as metanarrative signs: “Why so much significance is given to the idea of artists discovering ‘the real Australia’ is that this is a metaphor for national liberation – throwing off the shackles of a European vision, installing the distinctively local in pride of place in both high and popular culture (the art of the Heidelberg School belongs to both), taking possession of a new land, feeling at home in it. The production and circulation of visual imagery then is closely bound up with the



Figure 11: "Travelling Sheep" *The Victorian Readers Fourth Book*

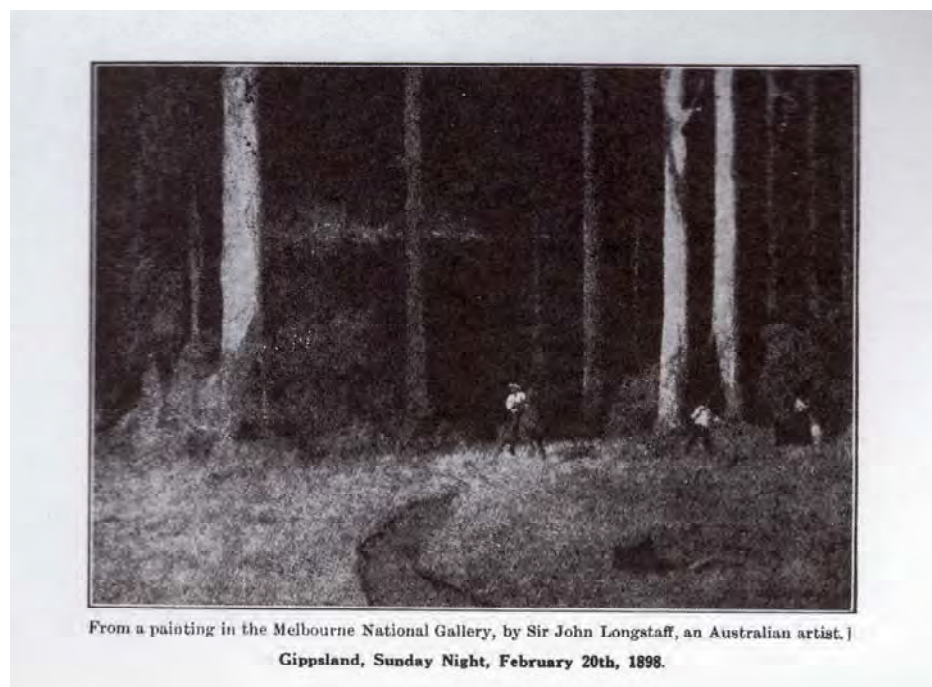


Figure 12: "Gippsland, Sunday Night, February 20th, 1898" *The Victorian Readers Fifth Book*

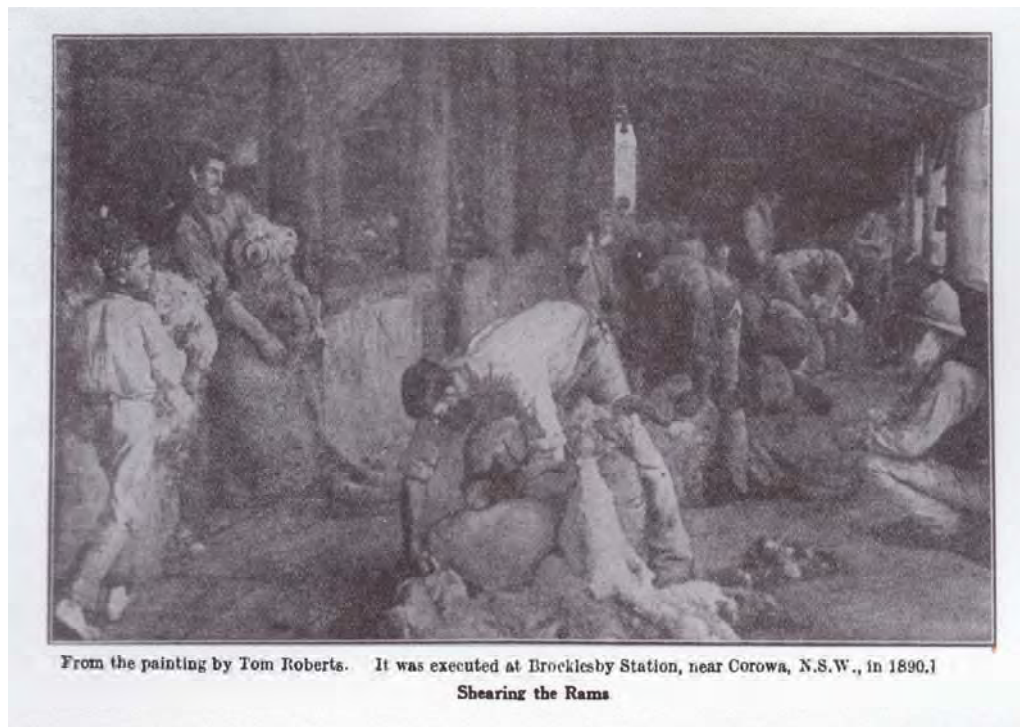


Figure 13: "Shearing the Rams" *The Victorian Readers Sixth Book*



Figure 14: "Breaking the News" *The Victorian Readers Seventh Book*

psychological occupation of the land” (64). Unlike Willis, however, I do not want to argue that national liberation is the point here. As we have already seen, imperial and national ideologies can, and often do, inform and support each other (even as they might not be wholly reconcilable). Furthermore, and as I noted at the outset of this chapter, making generalised claims about the “pride of the distinctively local”, about the so-called Heidelberg School and, for example, the *Bulletin*, is particularly dangerous. Indeed, as Galbally, McLean and others have argued, the Heidelberg myth was promulgated by members of the school themselves, and in this respect alone – should be seriously distrusted. What is more interesting, however, is this notion of “psychological occupation of the land” being enacted visually and I will return to this same point later in the chapter.

The frontispiece images, *Travelling Sheep; Gippsland, Sunday Night, February 20th, 1898; Shearing the Rams* and *Breaking the News* – in the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh books of the Victorian Readers respectively, highlight a romanticised artistic re-imagining or re-presentation of the past. This period of growth in the Readers is marked by a maturing and selective national imagination – one that affirms and celebrates myth-making narratives of Australian people and landscape. The two paintings by John Longstaff, *Gippsland* and *Breaking the News*, invoke a popular “man versus nature” narrative whereby the Australian landscape can, and does, exact a heavy price from those attempting its civilisation and development (Astbury 38). In *Breaking the News*, death is the ultimate cost of the struggle, as intimated by evidence of a disastrous mining accident glimpsed through an open door. In this painting the theme of pioneering type versus alien land is given a domestic and more familiar dimension, an important element in a national imaginary that must appeal to, and connect with, individual imaginations before it can be produced as a collective experience.

In *Gippsland*, the malevolent natural elements of the Australian environment, particularly its propensity for bushfires, again offer an anecdotal narrative painting of the pioneer or early settler’s struggle (the victim narrative of Curthoys’ critiques,

the monstrous feminine as described by Schaffer, and, in the same vein, the consuming landscape of Lawson's readings). As is already clear from examination of written texts in the Readers, the bushfire theme is popularly incorporated into pioneer mythology. Clearly, this coding is equally powerful and pervasive in national imagery.² In a logical progression from narratives of pioneering struggles to narratives of pastoral expansion and development, the Australian legend undergoes a kind of metamorphosis. In *Travelling Sheep* and *Shearing the Rams* then, the figure of the pioneer and that of the hard-working, hard-living stockman, drover or shearer coalesce in strong masculine figures that heroicise pastoral labour. *Travelling Sheep* and *Shearing the Rams* have a strong romantic appeal in that both paintings consciously reference a perceived golden period in the nation's economy when agriculture, and more particularly, the wool industry, saw Australia prosper. In *Travelling Sheep*, the solitary drover, his faithful sheepdogs and an ensuing cloud of dust are synonymous with an Australian mythology about the expansiveness and freedom of life on the open road, a road leading directly to the nation's growth and success. *Shearing the Rams*, even more powerfully, is offered up as a singular image that can be read as representing the pastoral industry, and in turn, an image of Australia itself. Terry Smith writes in an influential article about this particular work, "It is not only one of the best-known Australian paintings, it is one of the most widely known Australian *images*. It is regarded as an outstanding painting within a period usually heralded as the 'Golden Age' of Australian art *and* it is one of the first images to which Australians turn when wishing to illustrate the 'characteristically Australian'" [emphases in the original] (70). *Shearing the Rams*, both as cultural artefact and in terms of how it operates within School Readers, is particularly important as part of an inscribed metanarrative of national growth. As Smith argues, this painting is iconic (along with other major works by Roberts) precisely because it "*show[s] that settlement is complete, that it [Australia] is now a mature economy driven by raw, apparently 'natural' productivity*" [my emphases] (66). Clearly, codings of completion, belonging and naturalness are especially important in the Readers' production of a benign and heroic version of the nation's

past. Significantly too, this “naturalised” productivity concomitantly naturalises settler claims to the land (and by extension, Aboriginal peoples’ lack of claim).

I want now to turn to the painting that appears as the frontispiece to the first-published but final book in the series of Victorian Readers, Frederick McCubbin’s *The Pioneers*. It has been a deliberate choice to leave this artwork to last because it is here, I think, that the clearest interrelationship can be drawn between the cyclical nature of childhood, adolescence and adulthood and notions of national growth as evidenced in the Readers. In the Australian imaginary, this painting is accorded super-iconic status. As Jane Clark and Bridget Whitelaw argue: “*The Pioneers* represents the culmination of McCubbin’s paintings on the theme of pioneering Australian settlement. By choosing a triptych format, traditional in religious art, he deliberately raised his theme to a level of reverence” (149). In the context of the Readers, it is important to note the deployment of the image and of the caption beneath, the one that frames this chapter, “A picture that enshrines a complete record of our life and land”. In the left-hand panel, the active and masculine figure tends a campfire while the pioneering woman dejectedly ponders the surrounding wilderness. In the middle panel, a hut in the bush, so much a touchstone of pioneering progress, is visible in the clearing. The man, yet another Australian axeman, is seated on a fallen tree, the axe at his side, while the woman as Madonna figure has produced the child of the national imaginary, the white indigene. This central panel, the largest of the three, draws the viewer’s attention to a narrative of national growth, where the family is at the core of that story. In a logical progression, the right-hand panel can be read as an address to the benefactors of this noble and enterprising past. The young man kneeling at the cross is emblematic of an ideal reader who will not only inherit the land but also, and just as importantly, those values inscribed in its settlement. Though only a wooden cross remains of the pioneers, it is clear that their legacy lives on. Indeed, the cross is a lasting symbol of sacrifice and promise, particularly when located in the Edenic landscape of this painting. *The Pioneers* encapsulates not “a complete record of our life and land” but rather, it enshrines the secular imagined community as described



Figure 15: "The Pioneers" *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*

by Anderson, where a sacred story of national growth necessarily draws on religious iconography and foundational myths.

While these iconic paintings appear only in the Victorian Readers, there are other similarly informed images of Australian pioneering legends across the various state reading series. Along with the frontispieces already considered, the illustrations under examination here are intimately bound up with ideas about national identity and the Readers' metanarrative of national growth. As in the literary production of the pioneer and associated codings of settlement however, the range of visual representations is also diverse. There are photographs and illustrations of stockmen, miners and mining life, bushfires, bullock teams and timber cutters – all subjects popularly understood to be *uniquely* Australian images - despite their diversity (and in some cases, their indebtedness to North American constructions of the “frontier”).³

Huts in the wilderness – picturing a pioneering spirit

In school Readers, images of pioneers appear across state reading series and across grade levels. The pioneers, their lives and their work, are pictured as integral to the civilised expansion and development of Australia. The visual effects of this pioneering legend are strikingly similar to the legend's literary production. And pictures of pioneers are just as populous as their written counterparts. In the illustrations, there is an emphasis on the pioneer's isolation and therefore, on his or her stoicism and endurance – the victimhood and suffering to which Curthoys refers. In these pictures, the interaction of the figure of the pioneer (or the pioneer hut) in the wilderness serves to demonstrate the importance of achieving a physical as well as psychological occupation of the land, where one informs the other. For example, in *The Victorian Readers Seventh Book*, Mr W. S. Wemyss's drawing of a settler hut accompanies Robert Croll's narrative “Lonely Places” (Figure 16). Of the earliest settlers of Victoria's high country, Croll writes: “Stout of heart, these pioneers hewed at the forest: a clearing showed, the house sprang up, and the wilderness became a home” (109). Yet, home in this context is a fraught and

uncanny space, always threatened by a knowledge of unhomeliness. Registering this ever-present threat of unhomeliness, the illustration represents the legendary pioneering spirit as perseverance and power over the alienating landscape.

In Wemyss's drawing the scene is framed by young and distinctly Australian eucalypt trees at either side of the image while in the background, an imposing mountain range looms over the scene, miniaturising the hut in the middle distance. The physical isolation of the hut and by extension, its inhabitants, is highlighted by the sheer magnitude of the hills, mountains and forest that surround the dwelling. The viewer must pick over the dark shapes of the vegetation to identify the isolated house in its clearing. Fences drawn in at the front and side of the hut convey the pioneer's industriousness in settling the area, a tangible boundary or claim. The fences themselves though, are another ambiguous image, in the sense that they seem futile as they are overshadowed by a formidable landscape. The illustration suggests that this is indeed the lonely place of the story's title. More importantly, however, this same perceived loneliness (read emptiness) of the landscape, and the presence of European settlement, simultaneously suggests the absence of Australian Aboriginal peoples.

There are echoes of loneliness throughout the pioneer quest narrative as it appears in school Readers. This informs the mood of the drawing by G. C. Benson in *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book* which accompanies George Essex Evans' poem "The Women of the West" (Figure 17). Here the sole figure of the pioneering woman is central, and conveniently co-opted into the white masculinist legend. Standing with her hand resting on a fence post or sawn-off tree, the woman is turned away from the viewer towards a distant figure on horseback. The figure, presumably the woman's husband, holds his hat aloft in salute. Given the woman's pensive posture and the minute scale of the man in the distance, it is clear that he is departing (though for where or for how long is unknown). A solitary gum tree on the left is not just a framing device but also stands as a remnant of that which has been overcome. To subdue nature, both the wilderness and the woman herself, is central



Figure 16: "Lonely Places" *The Victorian Readers Seventh Book*



Figure 17: "On the Frontiers of the Nation" *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*

to the pioneering paradigm. (And if the young gum is read as symbol of repressed Aboriginality, we can also add the subjugation of Aboriginal Australians here.) In another sense, the tree as metonymic device stands in for the absent man. Against the vastness of the sky, the man on the horizon and the woman in the foreground of the image appear insignificant. The picture's caption "On the frontiers of the nation" is reflected in the apparent emptiness that awaits the figure on horseback. The hut and the woman in her bonnet and apron are the last signs of civilisation, domesticity and of "nation", before the wilderness begins again. In this way, the frontier aesthetic empties the landscape in order to silence it – before it can then be filled with the figures of the new owners claiming their possession (McLean "Picturing Australia" 59).

Another pioneering woman at the frontiers of nation is pictured in an illustration accompanying "The Cedar Getters", a story in the *New Australian School Series Third Book* (NSW) (Figure 18). Again the woman and the hut symbolise the pioneers' battle with the wilderness. An image of domesticity, the woman in this scene is feeding her chooks in an open space at the front of a slab hut complete with chimney and garden. Yet immediately behind the barrier created by the hut itself, a veil of thick bush (the trees are washed out and ill defined) forms a menacing backdrop. Indeed, directly behind the woman herself is a kind of misty wash that suggests a ghostly emptiness just beyond the safety of the hut and its immediate environs. This is Marcus Clarke's alien and melancholy land common to the theme of pioneers living at the very edge of civilisation. The distance is depicted as an enormous expanse which is both mysterious and vaguely threatening, a vast unknown. As Bradford argues in relation to the postcolonial significance of habitation and home, "borders, boundaries and frontiers mark the distinction between settled and unsettled spaces, between home and not-home" (*Unsettling Narratives* 137).

Images of pioneering mythology in School Readers are not limited to drawings and reproductions of paintings. There is also an attempt to add more credence to the

stories of pioneer courage and determination (and to more clearly delineate settled space) through the inclusion of certain kinds of documentary evidence. In terms of the visual effects of a maturing national imagination in School Readers, the photograph as objective record becomes particularly useful. Of course, photographic images are not an objective record (though in the Readers they might be presented as such). Rather, as part of a narrative strategy, photographs are implicated in the creation of myths and legends just as much as any other artistic endeavour. In the construction of the image, what is left out, and what forms the focus of the scene, photographs equally provide pictures for the national imaginary. Susan Sontag's now seminal work *On Photography* is explicit about the photograph as cultural construct: "Although there is a sense in which the camera does indeed capture reality, not just interpret it, photographs are as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are" (7). According to Sontag, however, there has long been an assumption that the photograph provides some kind of truth or authenticity. Photographs are perceived as furnishing evidence, providing knowledge about the look of the past: "The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what's in the picture" (5).

In support of Sontag's arguments about the photograph as cultural construct, the pioneering photographs that appear in the Queensland School Readers have much in common with the drawings already examined. This commonality both reflects and constructs Anderson's "imagined community" in relation to an Australian foundational myth - where the same images are repeated again and again in the manner of religious iconography. For example, a photograph that appears in the *Queensland School Readers Book IV* pictures a roughly made slab hut surrounded by eucalypt trees (Figure 19). Just as in the other illustrations, the hut is central and represents the pioneer's struggle as it is positioned against a backdrop of gums. Like such images of pioneering days, the story this particular photograph accompanies, "Pioneering", offers up a romanticised and sentimental portrayal of Australia's early European settlers: "No book could tell you what hard struggles were crowded



Figure 18: "The Cedar Getters" *The New Australian School Series Third Reader*



The First Home.

Figure 19: "The First Home" *Queensland School Readers Book V*



Figure 20: "In the Early Days" *Queensland School Readers Book V*



Figure 21: "Pioneering" *Queensland School Readers Book V*

into that first year [...] But we stuck to our task, and for twelve months worked at a hundred jobs, as every man has to work who wants to carve out a home for himself in the bush" (205-207). The image then is evidence of how the pioneer overcomes this kind of hardship. The first home is evidence of permanency and its presence in the bush is a measure of some degree of success. Supporting Bradford's argument about the resonant trope of home in settler society texts, both the written and visual codes here "represent a particular kind of dwelling: simple sturdy and snug, a haven from what is dangerous and unfamiliar" (*Unsettling Narratives* 137). Just as in the other illustrations, the hut is central and represents the pioneer's desire to be "at home" as it is positioned against a backdrop of gums, where the trees can be read as representative of the ranks of the conquered, the repressed psychic upheavals of colonialism. In the *Queensland School Readers Book V* other photographs draw on similar visual codes or tropes. A photograph captioned "In the early days" focuses on an elderly man seated before a rough dwelling with a bark roof (Figure 20). Again, metaphorical and symbolic associations of the uncanny are raised in the appearance of the hut, the safety of its very construction, while the gums with which it is surrounded suggest something of the instability of the colonial/settler society.

Meanwhile, another photo with the caption "Pioneering" records a relatively large camp in a clearing on the banks of a river (Figure 21). The tents, the human figures moving about the camp and a washing line strung between some saplings beside the water are evidence of domesticity in the wilderness. The photograph supports the Readers' metanarrative of a white European story of exploration, settlement and development. Photographs of huts in the bush provide "evidence" of this version of events, a story in which the land is empty (because there are no other European signs of civilisation) and therefore, fit to be claimed. The photographic images in the Readers, just like the utopian vision embraced by the deployment of paintings of the Heidelberg School, help to assuage a settler anxiety about knowing the country itself and doubts about a rightful claim to it. As Sontag writes: "As photographs

give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal, they also help people to take possession of space in which they are insecure" (9).

In the Readers, there are a range of visual codes that become incorporated into pioneer mythology and a larger story of national growth. Images of timber cutters, bullock teams and bushfire are all part of this metanarrative. In this sense, writing or picturing the pioneer allows for a range of character types to inhabit the national imaginary. All of these characters have some common traits, particularly in terms of the largely physical nature of their work and the ever-present battle with the natural environment and its intrinsic threats. Therefore, the two images selected to accompany Henry Kendall's "Song of the Shingle Splitters", in the Adelaide and Swan School Readers respectively, emphasise the relative insignificance of two men as they are pictured at their task. In *The Adelaide Readers Book III* a photograph from the Commonwealth Immigration Office makes much of the contrast between the tiny timber cutters and the vast, seemingly impenetrable forest surrounding them (Figure 22). The phenomenal girth of the tree at which they work, necessitating aids just to gain access, emphasises the immensity of their adversary (again playing on pioneering tropes and the ways in which they implicate nature's submission or subjugation). In a similar manner to the photograph, A. B. Webb's illustration in the *Swan School Readers Fifth Book* (WA), also relies on the visual contrast between the small human figures in the foreground and the dense forest that envelops them (Figure 23). A hut in the middle distance, so much a touchstone of these pioneering pictures, is evidence that these men have begun to civilise the wilderness, to make homely the unhomely.

In settling the far-flung reaches of the country, another version of the Australian pioneering legend is created – the bullock driver and his team, prepared to cross deserts, rivers and plains so as to shift supplies, timber and wool. Bullock and camel teams are significant elements in the national imaginary. In geographic and metaphoric senses, they move the nation's lifeblood, its produce, and provide a welcome communications link between pioneering outposts. Drawings of bullock



Figure 22: "The Song of the Shingle-Splitters" *The Adelaide Readers Book III*



Figure 23: "The Song of the Shingle-Splitters" *The Swan School Readers Fifth Book*

teams and their drivers in the Victorian School Readers present both man and beast as powerful symbols of a pioneer sensibility. In F. R. Crozier's illustration in *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book* (Figure 24) there is a sense of movement in the scene, the bullocks' tails appear momentarily suspended as they swing to the side, the whip seems about to drop with a crack, and the back legs of the animals are braced as they lean forward heavily. These aspects of the image contribute to a picture of progress, of development. As can be expected of pictures of pioneering days, thick forest frames either side of the picture and appears again in the distance, while just ahead, there is a hut tucked into a clearing on the right. This illustration accompanies Veronica Mason's "The Bullock Dray" where the poem reiterates a familiar story of conquest, settlement and expansion. The sense of endurance that informs the image is equally the point of Mason's poem: "Curving up the rugged track;/ Plodding, patient, steady, slow,/ Two and two the bullocks go" (75). Central to the poem is the conquest of the bush. At the heart of the scented bush where "tall and grant, giant splitting-trees do stand" the axemen are at work: "Palings drop like swift-reaped wheat,/ Heavy thud of falling axe,/ Fresh-cut timber piled in stacks" (76). The timber is loaded onto the bullock dray and slowly, the powerful, patient animals begin their homeward journey back down the winding track. In this way, the poem makes a neat and complete circle back to its beginning, where the bullocks and their driver contribute to the harvest of the bush, and therefore, the construction of new settlements.

In *The Victorian Readers Fourth Book*, Allan T. Bernaldo's drawing of a bullock dray is similarly composed (Figure 25). The figure of the bullock driver is pictured to the side of his team, his whip held aloft. Impressions of foliage and ferns at the top left and bottom right of the picture, as well as providing a sense of balance to the composition, suggest the bullocks' passage along a forest track. Behind the heavily-laden wagon, indistinct lines and shadowing suggest a forest-like background through which the bullock team travels. In the Crozier illustration the bullock driver is the focus. Following the line created by the movement of the sawn timber log and the bullocks, the viewer's eye is drawn across to the driver and in turn, his whip



Figure 24: "His Great Whip Aloft, the Driver Plods Beside His Beasts" *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*

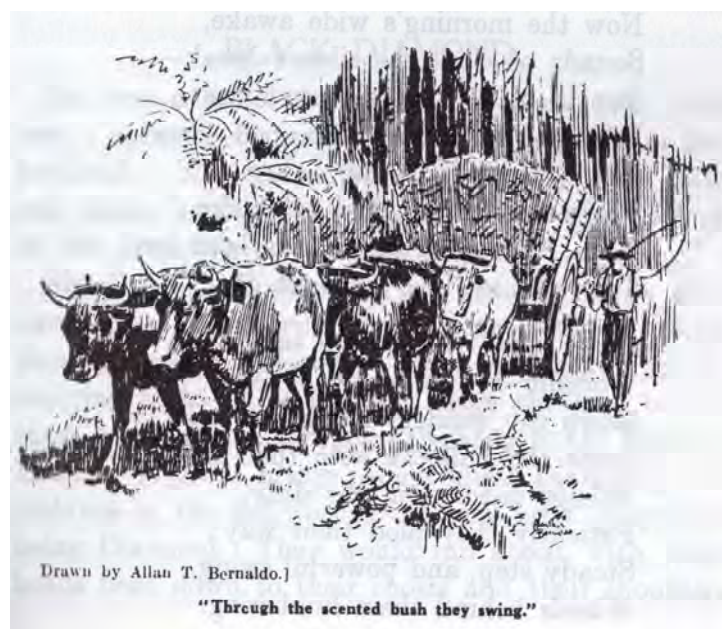


Figure 25: "Through the Scented Bush They Swing" *The Victorian Readers Fourth Book*

hand points across toward the hut in the forest. In Bernaldo's drawing, however, the heads of the two leading bullocks immediately engage the viewer and following the line of bullocks back to the wagon, the driver himself is smaller and less central to the image. The bullocks themselves carry the weight of symbolic significance attached to such pictures of national growth. This is not surprising given that the drawing illustrates Henry Lawson's "The Teams" where a pioneer-victim trope is explicit and the mood is considerably more sombre than Mason's celebration of the bullock dray. The bullocky of Lawson's poem is a wizened figure, his face partly hidden by his broad hat and his whip resting upon a shoulder. There is something resigned about him as he "plods with a gait, like that of his weary, patient slaves" (91). And the reference to slaves is particularly relevant here in light of Curthoys' reading of the Exodus narrative that informs Australian pioneering mythologies.

Further to these codings of pioneering imagery selected for school Readers (and here I have considered just a selection of illustrations), I want to shift focus to those peoples presumed missing or absent in the very images of white settlement I have so far examined. As Bernard Smith observes, "with the Aborigines banished to hidden reserves [...] The Heidelberg painters and their successors were now able to consolidate the pastoralist dream of a sun-kissed Arcadia" (22). Graphically and consciously, these pictures illustrate the role of Aborigines in the national imaginary, in which "forgetting was a discourse of repression, a nativist discourse without Aborigines" (McLean "White Aborigines 59).

Evidence of a disappearing race – picturing Aboriginal peoples

Visual representations of Aboriginal peoples in school Readers are largely fixed and historical, drawing on the trope of the lost race in ways that disavow Aboriginal presence in the shape of the contemporary national imaginary. Images of Aboriginal peoples and their cultural traditions are mainly presented as anthropological curiosities. In this way, photographs of "authentic" Aboriginal peoples, their weapons, dress and cultural celebrations, produce in the Readers documentary evidence of the last of his (or her) tribe. Such photographs suggest that Aboriginal

cultures and peoples have already been consigned to the annals of history (particularly the study of natural history). Yet, just as my readings of those literary texts examined in chapter 3 of this thesis suggest, Aboriginal peoples are hardly passive victims in a national story of growth. Nor are they entirely absent. While the Australian landscape of school Readers is persistently coded as empty and unknown, its indigenous peoples are ever-present in both narratives and images of exploration, settlement and development. As I argued in chapter 3, while these presences are often incidental and unacknowledged, they are nevertheless manifestations of Aboriginal resistance to an institutionalised, white version of the nation's story. Significantly, school Readers include several images that represent "first contact" between early white European explorers and Aboriginal people, the point at which a white Australian story begins to subsume the stories of the "other" but where this other proves powerfully resilient and resistant.

In *The New Australian School Series Fourth Reader* (from NSW), an illustration by D. H. Souter accompanies a story called "Incidents of Cook's voyage along the East Coast" (Figure 26). Souter depicts a scene of confrontation between Europeans and two local Aboriginal men. Significantly, it is an Aboriginal figure who is the focus of the illustration. As metanarrative sign then, this image offers something rather more complex than a benign white "discovery". Here Australian Aboriginal peoples are clearly the first owners of the land before the concerted onset of European invasion.

The Aboriginal man is waiting on the land, highlighting his prior claim to the country, as the Europeans cautiously approach in their boat. The Aboriginal man is caught in a moment of action – his arm is outstretched, as though warning the foreigners to keep their distance in a classic "noble savage" pose. This embodiment of an Aboriginal resistance to European incursion is significant in its counter discursive potential to a Reader metanarrative of national growth. Meanwhile, in the figures aboard the boat, a peaceful story of arrival is simultaneously reasserted. A man standing at the front suggests a white European blamelessness; he carries no weapons, his breast is exposed in the openness of his stance, and his hand, in a gesture of communication and peace, is upturned. Behind him, the boat's oars are



Figure 26: "Incidents of Cook's Voyage Along the East Coast" *The New Australian School Series Fourth Reader*

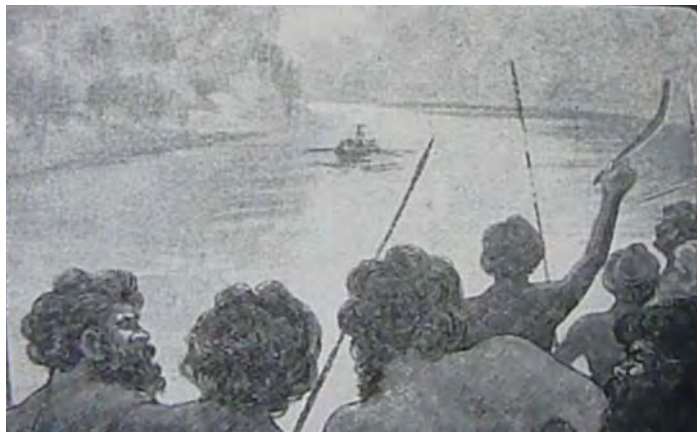


Figure 27: "A Perilous Moment" *The New Australian School Series Third Reader*

raised into the air, intimating an intention to come no closer. The ambivalence of the image, however, is borne out by the ship, the *Endeavour*, lying at anchor in the bay. It is a symbol of the forthcoming invasion of white Europeans and in its size and imposition; it suggests something rather more hostile and ominous. The literary text that contextualises this illustration reveals that the Europeans “hoped to make friends with the natives, who, however, were distrustful, and attempted to oppose the landing of the new-comers” (224). Going some way to explain the profound ambivalence of this moment, the illustration focuses on the two men who advance “as if to dispute the landing”, rather than the following moment of white hostility in which the men were fired upon. Despite the shots, the Aborigines reappear: “they had shown a coolness and courage which the voyagers could not but admire” (225). Reflecting this admiration, and a recognition of Aboriginal claims to the land, the pictorial space comes forward to locate the viewer alongside the Aboriginal men.⁴

A similarly ambivalent picturing of “contact” between white Europeans and Aboriginal Australians appears in *The New Australian School Series* (NSW) third book (Figure 27). This illustration accompanies the story “A perilous moment”, an account of confrontation between Europeans and Aboriginal people during Captain Sturt’s exploration of the Murray River. In this scene, the Aboriginal men in the foreground are depicted as frightening and savage in their nakedness, while three or more carry spears at the ready and a boomerang is raised into the air. Yet, compositionally, the viewer is positioned beside these indigenous peoples, the view slightly obscured by the heads of the Aboriginal men standing in front. In other words, we see from an Aboriginal perspective (something that is clearly not permitted in literary texts in school Readers, where there is not one example of an Aboriginal narrator or focaliser). In terms of the national imaginary, this kind of picturing of Aboriginal resistance (figured as hostility) works in two ways. A dominant reading of the image sees the Aboriginal men as wild, brutal and uncivilised – attacking well-meaning European explorers who come in peace. In this sense then, as clearly uncivilised men (their nakedness, their primitive weapons), Aboriginal people are inherently inferior to Europeans and therefore, ultimately,

destined to be replaced by white people. This reading better supports the Readers' metanarrative of national growth – a story in which white explorers are civilised, well-meaning and do not initiate hostilities with Aboriginal peoples – an attempt at a guiltless version of the nation's discovery and development. On the other hand though, this image implicitly recognises the European incursion on Aboriginal land. Again, the Aboriginal men are already standing on the land while the foreigners approach. There is a "belonging" apparent here. In contrast, the white Europeans are clearly recognised as invaders – they approach by boat, along a waterway. In recognising that the Aboriginal men in the drawing are defending their land, the spears and boomerang are not evidence of savagery and wildness. Rather, the illustration presents an alternative to stories of the nation's heroic discovery, exploration and settlement. It also manifests stories of Aboriginal resistance to a white invasion.

A different version of early contact between white European explorers and Aboriginal peoples appears as part of a story about Flinders and Bass's exploration of the coast and rivers near Sydney in 1796 (Figure 28). This illustration, in the same *The New Australian School Series Third Reader*, presents an image of the benevolent white man and his civilising influence. In this drawing, Flinders is pictured cutting an Aboriginal man's hair. The difference between the white man and the savages is pronounced. The Aboriginal men are naked except for loincloths, their hair and beards are wild and unkempt, and again, there is evidence of their primitive weaponry. This is in stark contrast to the white man's appearance. His hair is tied neatly at the back of his neck and he wears stockings and shoes. The scene depicts an event from the story of the Tom Thumb in which Flinders and Bass are forced to land among "numbers of strange blacks" (39). I have already commented on the significance of the hair-cutting episode where Flinders, not merely "amus[ing] himself by clipping the hair and beards of the savages", is equally marking these people and his interactions with them (just as he marks and records the landscape through which he travels). In his need to make these men in his own image, Flinders adopts the paternalistic, condescending attitude that later informs how white



Figure 28: "The 'Tom Thumb'" *The New Australian School Series Third Reader*



Figure 29: "The Adventures of an Early Settler" *The New Australian School Series Fourth Reader*

institutions interact with Australia's first peoples. Moreover, in both written and visual versions of this instance in a metanarrative of national growth, the Aborigines stand in for the land itself, and in this way, the texts work to contradict the codings of emptiness so particularly constructed in Readers.

Naturally, exploration of the nation's coastline and its interior eventually leads to settlement. Subsequently, school Readers also contain stories and images of contact between Aboriginal peoples and European pioneers or "settlers". Another text from *The New Australian School Series Fourth Reader*, "The Adventures of an Early Settler", inverts Australian history to depict a group of Aboriginal men as "savage persecutors" intent on the death of a lost white settler: "With the horrible conviction on my mind that a deadly struggle for life must soon take place, the very extremity of my danger and the force of my fear caused a reaction in my frame" (183). What follows is a dramatic tale of the man's narrow escape from his "dreaded enemies" who hunt him down, apparently for no reason, burning the hut in which he momentarily finds shelter and leaving him no choice but to seek refuge in a tree (killing at least two of his pursuers in the process). An illustration drawn to accompany this story therefore plays on stereotypical representations of the Aboriginal as wild, violent savage (Figure 29). The visual image in the Readers depicts a seemingly defenceless white man sheltering in a tree while his attackers gather below. (Significantly, in the story itself, the early settler has a "fowling piece" and a "pistol" – but neither is in evidence in the picture). Of the four hostile men below, at least two carry spears as well as shields decorated in a tribal fashion, and reiterating the "savage" nature of these hunters, all four of the men appear virtually naked. The Aboriginal man closest to the tree (and indeed, closest to the viewer) in the foreground of the scene wears a white headband, emphasising his dark skin, his very blackness. This man watches the white settler intently. Behind him, another man with a spear appears to be taking aim. It is clear then that this is an image produced to present Aboriginal people as bloodthirsty killers, willing to murder those brave white pioneers who merely desired to peacefully settle the Australian land. Indeed, on the point of death, the settler is fortuitously rescued only when a

search party locates him, frightening away his persecutors with their superior firepower. The settler's old friend, one of his rescuers, proclaims: "Well, if this is not enough to disgust a man with this horrid country, I don't know what he would have more!" (191). Importantly, even as the illustration depicts the Aboriginal men as cruel and barbarous, they are here aligned entirely with the "horrid" country itself, reiterating their prior claim to it and justifying their defence of the land (even as it is more overtly presented in both literary and visual texts as unnatural aggression).

The next group of Reader illustrations represent Aboriginal people in a somewhat different way, yet the construction of the image is informed by a similar purpose of disenfranchisement, control and notably, the visual production of Aboriginal absence (oxymoronic but powerful instances in which pictures, mainly photographs, are presented in the Readers as a record of a dying race). As well as marking the passing of a people, these images mark the passing of those cultural traditions associated with such peoples. There is considerable emphasis on the way in which the "natives" are adorned or dressed; on their ceremonies and on the objects they carry. They are represented as noble but unthreatening savages in these photographs – they are merely curiosities of a bygone era. These kinds of photographic documentation, despite what might be read as the benign view of the camera lens, are ideologically fraught. As Willis observes: "In every one of these photographs, no matter how bland and record-like, a power relation is inscribed, for the visual knowledge is being produced not for the people who are the subjects of the camera, but for those behind it and for the institutions they served" (Willis 107).

"Native with boomerangs", a photograph from the Commonwealth Immigration Office, is reproduced in *The Adelaide Readers Third Book* (Figure 30). The picture is portrait-like in its staged quality. The Aboriginal man in the photograph stands a little awkwardly as he faces the camera, a boomerang held up in his right hand. His chest and arms are marked with white paint, and his thighs are also painted. The child beside him holds a boomerang in front of his mouth, as though hiding from the camera. This is a stereotypical and demeaning vision that, as Willis describes, is

predicated entirely on the whiteness of the appropriating gaze: “Some visual conventions have persisted for over a century: for example the image of the singular male Aboriginal, naked except for a loincloth, holding spear, boomerang or shield and standing in a striking pose; or the profile or full face of the full blood Aboriginal with headband and unruly hair. These are icons of the wild man, the primitive; their meaning is formed again in their playing up of difference from the assumed white, clothed, European norm” (Willis 110). In the same Adelaide Reader, another photo from the Commonwealth Immigration Office has the caption “Australian natives ready for a corroboree” (Figure 31). Again, this is a staged photograph aimed at capturing something of an Aboriginal cultural heritage for a white audience. In this photo, a group of Aboriginal men are grouped together in a formal kind of arrangement – with a row of men standing at the back while another row is seated at the front. They are all dressed for the ceremony, their bodies painted white and some wearing headdresses. It is a photograph that produces Aboriginal people as subjects of anthropological interest, and contradictorily, a way of marking out Australianness: “For late nineteenth and early twentieth-century professional photographers [...] the native population became a major theme – one of the markers of the distinctiveness of Australia – with the same function of signifying place and/or nation as the unique flora and fauna. Thus albums of views and series of postcards (which peaked in popularity between roughly 1900 and 1920) would invariably contain generic examples of ‘an Australian Aborigine’, an individual man or woman photographed in order to stand for his/her tribe, but more typically for the entire Aboriginal ‘race’ – a collectivity which itself had been named as a singular entity by the settler culture” (107-8).

Another ethnographic image, one that works at the level identified by Willis in the above quotation, appears in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade VI* (Figure 32).

Captioned “Tasmanian Aboriginals”, these two photographs placed side by side produce a kind of official record of the full-blood Aboriginal person in Tasmania. Significantly, this kind of picture (where individuals stand in place for the Aboriginal race) accompanies a story entitled “Extinct Tasmanians”.⁵ The photographs document



Figure 30: "Native with Boomerangs" *The Adelaide Readers Book III*



Figure 31: "Australian Natives Ready for a Corroboree" *The Adelaide Readers Book III*

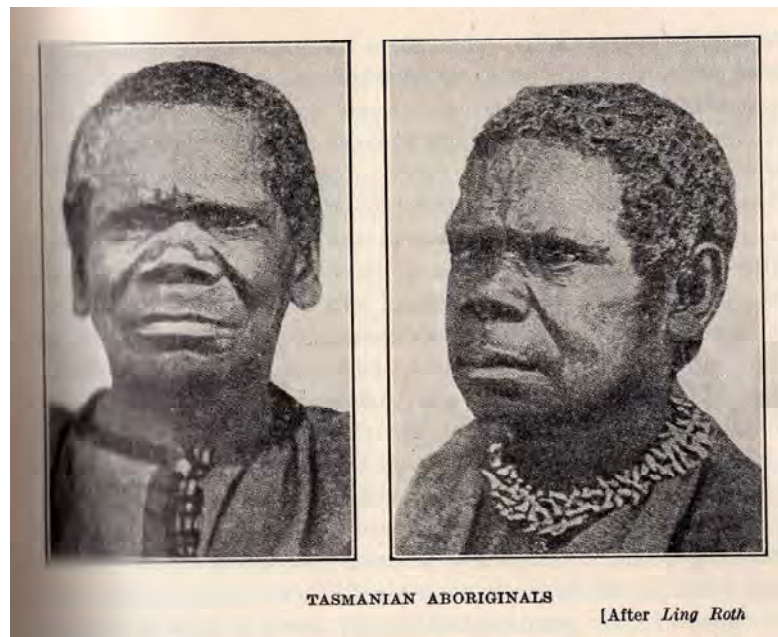


Figure 32: “Tasmanian Aboriginals” *The Tasmanian Readers Grade VI*

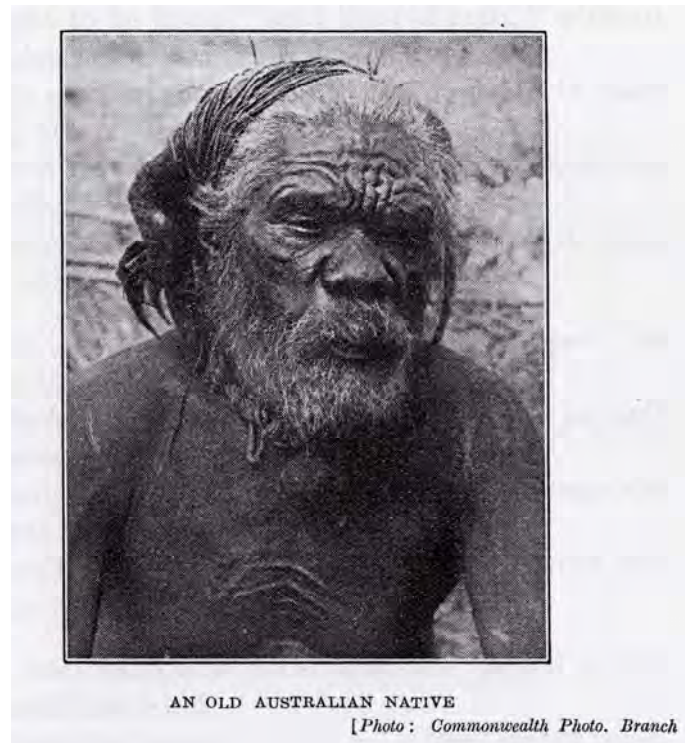


Figure 33: “An Old Australian Native” *The Tasmanian Readers Grade IV*

and record not just the Aboriginal person's facial structure but also, cultural adornments such as a shell necklace. Similarly, "An old Australian native", in *The Tasmanian Readers Grade IV*, where the scarification on the man's chest is carefully included in the photograph, also produces an anthropological subject (Figure 33): "The photographs posed as visual evidence of that which they were seeking to construct. This was particularly the case where photographs were captioned 'the last of their tribe', or where Aboriginality was designated as a sign of the past lingering on into the present – for example, the haunted face of Truganini reproduced in countless instances as 'the last Tasmanian Aboriginal'" (Willis 108). Indeed, in *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*, a drawing by G. C. Benson accompanies the poem "The Last of His Tribe" (Figure 34). The illustration is captioned "He dreams of the hunts of yore" – a line from the poem that emphasises the passing of the Aboriginal peoples and their traditional lives and cultural value.

Imaging identity – the white Indigene

In a startlingly similar pose (apart from the crucial difference in the ways in which each holds his head), Benson's drawing can be read alongside John Rowell's illustration of a white bush schoolboy (figure 35). The similarities and differences are instructive. In school Readers, Aboriginality is posited as an ancient foundation over which white culture is laid: "It functions as sign rather than as substance of continuity, solidity, tradition. It is these things reified and romanticised; an aesthetic of tradition stands in for the non-Aboriginal claimants of nation, for the lack of an actual one" (Willis 112). Given that the child figure is so central to a Reader metanarrative of national growth, the melding of the figure of the child and the figure of the Aboriginal invokes a powerful set of resonances. When the semiotic fields of Aboriginality and Australian childhood intersect or overlap, the national imaginary produces in itself a positive apperception of its own indigenous and youthful self. To return to the beginning again, the Readers include images of white Australian children where these children are consciously intended to be read as "native". Whereas in illustrations of the Australian legend (such as pictures of pioneers and stockmen), a romanticisation of the past occurs, the figure of the white



Figure 34: “He Dreams of the Hunts of Yore” *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*

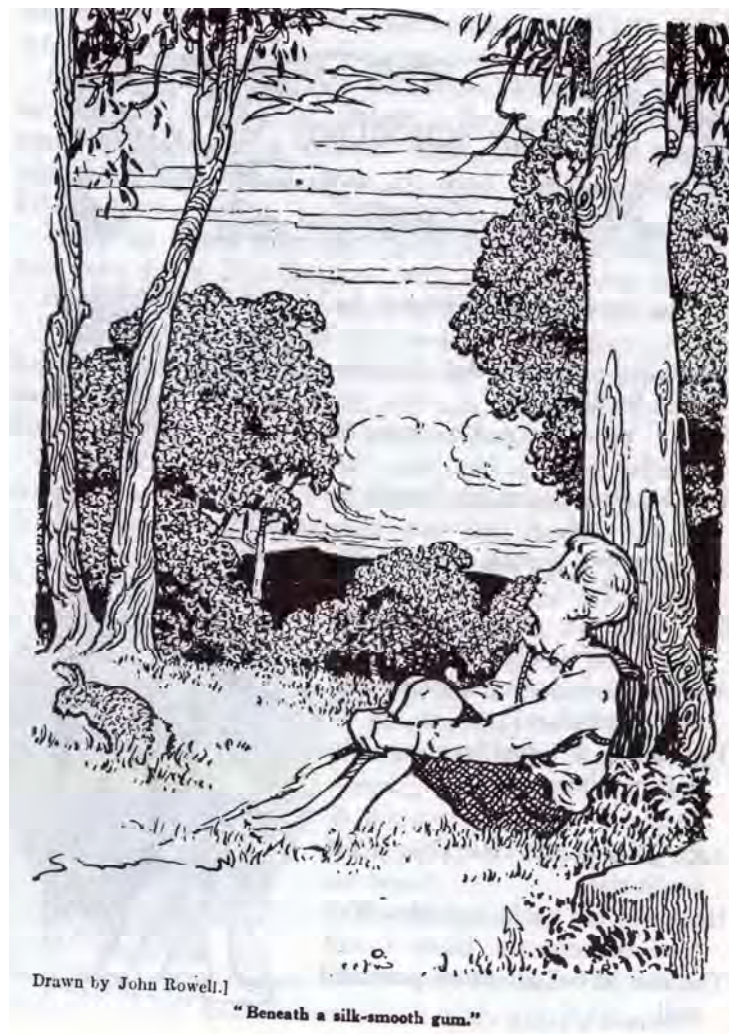


Figure 35: “Beneath a Silk-Smooth Gum” *The Victorian Readers Sixth Book*

indigene represents the future. Images of the white indigenous child are particularly important in School Readers where the child reader himself/herself is positioned to identify with the one who appears in the picture. So, while the Aboriginal man in Benson's drawing bends his head down, looking toward the ground, or indeed, not looking at all; the bush schoolboy, also in side profile, rests his arms around his knees, contented and expectant. Though they both have naked feet and both adopt similar sitting positions, each with his knees raised up, the man is a picture of dejection while the boy is optimistic, assured. Most significantly, this is revealed in his posture - the white man-child raises his head and looks up, looking to the future. The images are framed in very similar ways. While the Aboriginal man retreats into a shelter, the white man-child leans against a young tree. Young saplings on the left side of the pictures point to absent Aboriginal peoples, who, despite their defeated representation as in Benson's drawing, are nevertheless present in the white national imaginary pictured by Rowell. Most significantly in the Rowell image, a rabbit, a particularly powerful symbol of introduced and feral species, reflects the white Australian population's prolific settlement (and destruction) of the Australian natural environment. In inserting a rabbit (rather than, for example, an iconic kangaroo - à la "Dot and the Kangaroo") in this typical Australian bush scene something rather complex is at work. Indeed, the rabbit as synecdoche, in suggesting the success of a feral species in reproducing itself and in so doing, degrading the landscape, cannot be separated from the destruction for which it is so renowned. (Where the rabbit and the white boy of this picture are equally new natives, both are therefore implicated in a story of damage and devastation.)

Another illustration of a "bush boy", also by John Rowell, appears in *The Victorian Readers Sixth Book* (Figure 36). The caption beneath the image is instructive. It reads: "Glad-hearted and free". And, indeed, the picture presents another man-child entirely at home within a lush bush environment, presumably a rainforest setting judging here by the tree fern on the opposite bank, and the ferns in which the child's feet are entirely hidden. This is the kind of native child grown out of the land of which Mary Fullerton speaks in her *Bark House Days* reminiscences. Significantly

though, this child is equally one of an imperialist colonial imaginary. In carrying a staff so jauntily over his left shoulder, with his head and upper body twisted around as though to give directions to his presumed followers, he is an imperial adventurer. Although he carries only a stick (a play gun, a walking staff), he is nevertheless armed in his encounter with the wilderness. (And at the risk of taking the stick's importance too far, the child in this way recalls Conrad's "pilgrims" as he wanders into the interior of the image). In Figure 37, however, the imperialist agenda of the previous image is entirely resolved in the representation of the new colonial boy, one who is clearly, and uncomplicatedly, a native son. Barefoot and bareback riding, the boy raises an arm in salute as he wildly passes by. This man-child is the visual representation of C. E. W. Bean's literary production of the Australian lad in *The Dreadnought on the Darling* (the story the image accompanies). In illustrating a story of national growth, this image as metanarrative sign operates to reassure us of the confident and joyous future awaiting us as Australians. Moving full-circle then, back to the literary production of children and childhood of the first chapter, the boy in this illustration is, in Ethel Turner's words, a fine example of "the spirited, single-hearted, loyal ones who alone can 'advance Australia'" (*Seven Little Australians* 8). A metanarrative of national growth powerfully adopts such images to both endorse and sanctify the mythical story of a proud, white Australian nation.



Drawn by John Rowell.]

"Glad-hearted and free."

Figure 36: "Glad-hearted and Free" *The Victorian Readers Sixth Book*

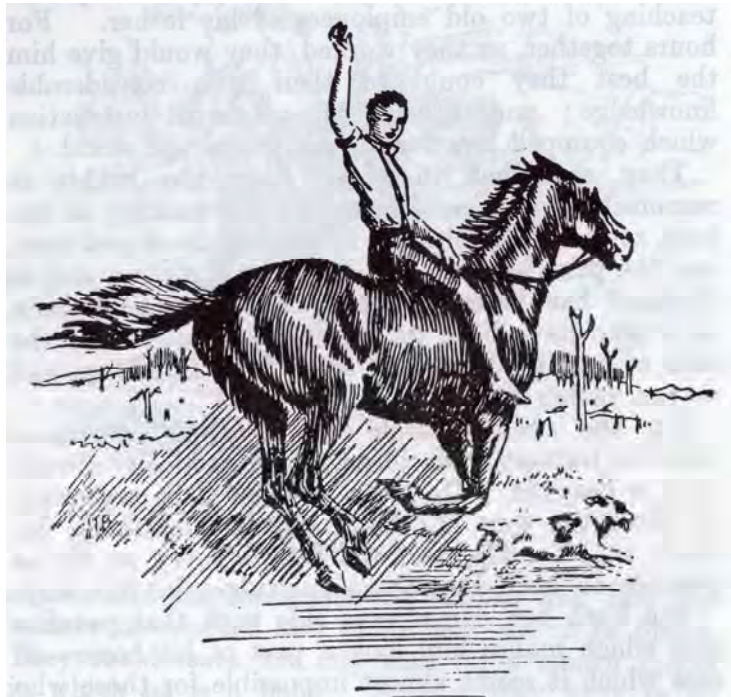


Figure 37: "The Youngster" *The Victorian Readers Fifth Book*

Notes:

¹ It is important to note Wilcox's use of the term indigenisation here. While Wilcox refers to the imperial-colonial duality inherent in a settler society such as Australia, he is equally commenting upon the adaptability and fluidity of an Australian identity, where a range of traditions and cultures (whether of the "parent" or the "other") can be selectively *indigenized* in a metanarrative of national growth.

² Although I cannot examine them all here, other illustrations of bushfires in school Readers serve to underscore this point. In *The Victorian Readers Fifth Book*, an illustration from "The Fire at Ross's Farm" depicts flames shooting overhead as two men beat at an advancing foe. In the *Queensland School Readers Book III*, a drawing captioned "How they beat at the fire" depicts a ragged line of defence as a woman and four men attempt to beat out a grass fire with eucalypt boughs (even as, in the distance, the bush is ablaze). The image accompanies the story "The Spirit of the Bush Fire". And again, in the *Queensland School Readers Book V*, a reproduction of a painting by J. A. Turner illustrates the story "A Bush Fire". Here entitled "A Bush Fire: Saving the Homestead", the image offers another version of the bushfire coding (in which settler anxieties are even more prevalent as the fire threatens to overwhelm the men on the front line to engulf the homestead, women, children and stock in the background of the painting).

³ While I cannot consider further examples here, images of stockmen mustering cattle and sheep are popularly included in school Readers, and these illustrations (as metanarrative signs) reproduce and reinforce codings of pioneering freedom, ingenuity and daring. Astbury notes, however, that the Australian stockman image in art was drawn from American visions of the frontier (76). There are some pronounced similarities between the American cowboy and the robust figure of the Australian stockman (and also in the ways in which Australian stockmen and pioneers are variously employed in the making of national legends. Similarly, the American cowboy is not simply synonymous with the "rancher").

⁴ Commissioned to commemorate Federation, E. Philips Fox produced another visual record of Cook's landing, *The Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay 1770* (1902). Unlike Souter in the school Reader, however, Fox depicts the moment at which Cook orders a third shot to be fired at the Aborigines protesting the landing. In Fox's painting, the viewer is forced to identify with the landing party: "From here, the viewer's sight-line to the Aborigines is the same as that of the marine who aims his gun at them. It is a graphic demonstration of a painting which, in a most didactic manner, puts Aborigines in the firing line" (McLean *White Aborigines* 60). As McLean notes, such a picturing of the "stark conquest" of Australia is unusual: "Fox seems to deliberately draw our attention to the consequences of colonization for the indigenous populations" (60).

⁵ The caption below this photograph, "After Ling Roth" refers to Henry Ling Roth (1855-1920), English-born anthropologist and author of *The Aborigines of Tasmania*, published in 1890.

Conclusion

In concluding this thesis, rather than reiterating the arguments I have presented, I want to suggest some future areas of research that have arisen out of this study. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, the shape of the thesis, and the necessary circularity of its argument, in which I have revisited earlier texts, images or ideas to develop and support my reading of the Readers' metanarrative (and a problematisation of this narrative), makes another discussion of these same points largely redundant. Secondly, in undertaking this study, what has become abundantly clear is the need for further research about school textbooks and equally importantly, the educational apparatus that produced them. What has become most pressing I think, is what my exploration of a Reader metanarrative suggests not only about a national imaginary, but about the institutionalization of this imaginary.¹ To conclude then, I want to argue for a reconsideration of the genealogies of school textbooks and school systems as entirely necessary to understanding the construction of national literatures, alongside, or perhaps due to, colonial, national and imperial imaginaries. Such genealogies can only be developed with due consideration to earlier, concurrent and later educational developments in other Australian colonies and states, and indeed, educational thinking and practice in other British colonies (or former colonies). The need for such a study is, in some ways, pre-empted in Dale's *The English Men* when she argues: "There is a need to connect understandings of power, interpellation and the formation of subjectivity in the encounter with the literary text, with scrutiny of the operation of institutional

power within the classroom” (205).

Although my study was never intended to be a history of an educational apparatus or an interrogation of classroom operations, it has often crossed over into this parallel territory, a territory sometimes difficult to navigate due to its rather untidy inter-disciplinary nature. While my work has been informed by both Literary and Cultural Studies (though not necessarily in equal measure), I have also needed to engage with educational history and Historical Studies more broadly to understand the educational climate and context in which school Readers were produced and used. The point I want to make here is how these wider areas of Literary/Cultural Studies and education/educational histories must more fruitfully inform each other in the kind of study I am envisioning, and one that is lacking in Australia (even as other countries, India and England for example, have been the subjects of studies of this kind). As I stated in the introduction, while there do exist some very valuable theses about Australian school reading materials, these are usually restricted to one state or colony, and do not encompass similar developments overseas. Even more importantly, an educational focus can preclude the wider implications of such studies for broader literary and cultural institutions, the development of Australian Literary Studies at a tertiary level, or the makings of an Australian literary canon for example.

What I propose therefore is a study of the elementary education apparatus in Australia (and its concomitant reading materials), whereby such a history is firmly situated in relation to colonial and imperial networks of the period. In some senses then, such a study would take in what Leigh Dale’s *The English Men* could not encompass, the institutionalization of “English” and Australian literature at elementary school rather than at tertiary educational level. Indeed, in her conclusion, Dale points to the importance of such a study. Speaking of the flow-on effects of tertiary literary studies in secondary school classrooms, Dale writes: “This is a reflection of the pervasiveness of the discipline, and the wave of influence that

retains its energy for decades, traveling from metropolitan English Departments to every single student in country high schools, via graduates who become teachers and work in related professions" (198). Of course, what is implied here is the reverse "wave of influence" in which primary school students trained in the values of particular texts and modes of reading go on to become university academics or writers. For example, Dale identifies poet-professor Vincent Buckley as making the most "important intellectual contribution" to the academic study of Australian literature (165). In his memoir *Cutting Green Hay* Buckley reminisces about his school days and educational reading materials. While it is only conjecture, Buckley's antipathy to the Britishness of these Readers might have been a significant factor in his later commitment to instituting Australian literature:

We had the *First Book*, the *Fifth Book*, and so on, up to eight: all were standard primers, and, as I say, they took most country children of the time (the 1930s of the Great Depression) up to the end of their effective schooling. We may deduce a definite ideology from these books [...] of the British Empire as a vast and beneficent force, rather like the pattern of God's footsteps, roving everywhere, or nearly everywhere, and looking after everyone – or at least those who were sensible enough to let it. Australia was British, a new place and occasion for the British virtues, tested as they were by British institutions, British antiquity and British gallantry. Of course it was a very different place from the homeland, which is why it was so lucky that the fertile British had been chosen to inhabit it [...] The readers, while being more varied and interesting than my account may have suggested, tried to join the two continents, the two homelands, but in the psychological interests of the founding one" (17).

Similarly, David Malouf writes of the influence of school Readers for those writers who, like him, were educated in Queensland primary schools: "Three generations of Queensland children, and such future writers as Jack Lindsay, Gwen Harwood, John Blight, Peter Porter, Charles Osborne, Thea Astley, Thomas Shapcott, Rodney Hall and others spent five days a week for something like nine years, reading the same poems and prose readings [...] and led towards the same further reading" (1).

Malouf describes the Readers as “an excellent beginning for little writers-to-be” and interestingly, in contrast to Buckley, sees these texts as providing something of a “homecoming” (5):

To get the music of “Daffodils” or “The Ancient Mariner” into your head, somewhere between 9 and 13, even if its meaning escaped you, to have it by heart and in your heart, was to get more of the real experience of the thing than you could ever have guessed. It meant that later, years later, the whole of English poetry was open to you, since you had already got hold of the music of it and had grasped intuitively, through the music, a meaning so deeply grounded in the poem that reading it with a mature eye was like recovering an earlier sense, only vaguely caught but wonderfully recognizable, that made the new one a kind of homecoming. (5)

To provide some sense of the importance of imperial educational networks and the significance of educational experiments carried out within these networks (in colonies such as India, Ireland and Australia), particularly as these later informed developments at “home” in the imperial centre, I want to revisit the educational history of my introduction. While in England the government would avoid the political minefield of elementary education until 1870, it had a long tradition of intervention in Irish education. As J. M. Goldstrom explains in his classic study of the working class school Reader in England and Ireland: “Ireland’s hostile population and alien religion was menacing enough to loosen the purse strings” (52). The Irish National system grew out of the educational reforms inspired by Quaker Joseph Lancaster and his monitorial system (based on Andrew Bells’s so-called “Madras system” developed in India in the late 1700s).² Lancaster’s monitorial system was influenced by his nonconformist views, while Bell’s system was indebted to the teachings of the Church of England. Lancaster’s reforms were therefore responsible for the 1814 founding of the British and Foreign Schools Society in England, a system designed to cater for *all* nonconformist children. In this way, Lancaster also influenced the Irish system in its mission to cater to all major Christian denominations. However, and this is a key difference in terms of tracing

the development and use of reading materials, because the British and Foreign Schools Society provided for all Protestants, reading and spelling lessons could be reasonably drawn from the “holy scriptures”. In Ireland, to ensure Catholic support, the Bible could *not* be used to teach reading or spelling (the Irish Catholics objected to pupils reading the Bible without appropriate guidance or comment). Hence, the need for reading books. The radicalism of the Irish National System then, along with its secular nature, lay in the organisational structure of the educational apparatus itself. An inter-denominational board of commissioners would superintend a national system of education to provide “combined moral and literary and separate religious education” (Goldstrom 61). Henceforth, the Commissioners introduced a curriculum to be taught from the books it published, by teachers it had trained, under the supervision of inspectors it had appointed. This kind of system, the one adopted and adapted for Australia (that still informed administrative and pedagogical practices in the early twentieth century), and the texts it produced, are valuable resources in a genealogy of English/Australian literary studies.

Tracing this genealogy, which will require considerable engagement with contemporaneous pedagogical practices, as influenced by developments in educational and curriculum theory is outside the scope of this thesis. Yet, some sense of the teaching and learning context in which Readers functioned is necessary. As already noted, school Readers were produced by and for a nineteenth-century educational system in which literacy for the masses was a primary goal. In this way, even into the twentieth century, the Readers and their uses continued to be shaped by prescriptive instruction in the three Rs. Indeed, the three Rs still accounted for sixty five percent of curriculum time distribution in Victoria in 1924 (Turney 47). There were, however, some very good reasons for the continuing dominance of this rather bland and formal subject-based pedagogy (despite interest in ideas and practices associated with the “new education” that became popular around the turn of the century). The highly centralised education systems, often inadequate teacher training and the demands of inspectorial and external examination all combined to

place Australian teachers in “a pedagogical straitjacket” (Turney 34). For ill-prepared and often very young teachers, especially those produced by the pupil-teacher or junior-teacher schemes, uniformity across courses, standards, methods and books was sometimes welcome, even necessary.

Despite the persistence of the focus on demonstrable proficiency in the “basic subjects”, Australian educationists followed developments overseas and attempted to instigate change accordingly. In concert with the reasons discussed above, the First World War and the Depression of the thirties impeded progress significantly. Nevertheless, more contemporary influences are also evident in school Reader production and use. Most profoundly, Neo-Herbartian ideas about the moral purpose of education, and the importance of literature and history in achieving this objective, are apparent in the selection of material for Australian school Readers. In the preface to *The Victorian Reading-Books Eighth Book*, for example, the committee acknowledges that in developing the series, “the inculcation of sound morality was always to be kept in view” (n.p.). As Barcan observes, the Herbartians’ emphasis on literature and history along with an interest in science and the study of the natural world “appealed to those anxious to develop a national spirit” (223). As this thesis has demonstrated, fostering such a spirit is central to the production and use of school Readers. Further to exploring the pedagogical and curriculum theories that impacted on the use of twentieth-century school reading materials, I wish to highlight some instances or “scenes” of teaching among these connections. In this way, I draw attention to the archive-based work that remains to be done, especially in terms of how Readers actually functioned in classrooms. To do so, I return to the story of my grandmother.

Readers, writers and teachers

In a hallway cupboard, among a rather haphazard collection of letters, notebooks, newspapers and scrapbooks, there is a pamphlet dated November 11, 1934. It commemorates the “Dedication of the Shrine of Remembrance” at the National War

Memorial of Victoria. Annie has carefully written her instructions at the top of the page: *Please keep this. Put it with my other belongings.* Annie, a passionate reader and writer, is fortunately also something of an archivist. Somewhere in between the chenille bedspreads and the slide projector are the belongings of which she writes; lecture notes from Ballarat Teachers' College, classroom lesson plans from the late 1920s, District School Inspector reports, scrapbooks, newspaper cuttings, personal letters, photographs and diaries.

Drawing on this collection, my grandmother's archive of self, I want to briefly, and in closing, explore the intersection of school Readers and the educational apparatus, what might be called the "scene" or "theatre" of teaching. In his work on culture and government Ian Hunter writes that "we owe our ability to conceive of popular education as a particular kind of ethical and social problem not to the concept of culture and its prophets but to the formation of a particular kind of governmental apparatus" (17). This apparatus, particularly the administrative and pedagogical machinery that drove reforms of the popular school system in nineteenth-century England, is not so far removed from an early twentieth-century Australian education system in which the pupil-teacher scheme and the overseeing inspectorate were central. Annie Gillard was born in 1909. She began her long association with the Victorian Education Department, when, at 16, she was appointed junior teacher at State School no. 817 at Edenhope, in Victoria's western district. A further period as junior teacher at the nearby town of Harrow, where Annie completed her own schooling, preceded her entry to Ballarat Teachers' College in 1928. According to a letter received from the department on the occasion of her retirement, in her college year Annie impressed as "an admirable student and a capable, forceful teacher". According to a booklet produced for the Harrow Primary School Centenary, a visiting Inspector suggested that the then junior teacher (Anne Houlihan) talked too much. In the words of this anonymous figurehead of teaching excellence: "She must learn to speak less and to use a low, deep voice" (Mitchell, 16).

The journals from these three years of teacher training, from 1926 to 1928, offer a glimpse of a scene of teaching, where Annie's notes and carefully-written lesson plans provide a kind of "script" for the reading of school texts, particularly in terms of reading lessons and the way in which reading texts were framed. As School Papers and school Readers were produced for similar purposes around Australia, the teaching methods outlined in Annie's notes are a contemporaneous and relevant (though not necessarily representative) model for the practice of reading instruction in state schools. At this time in Victoria, the late 1920s, teachers were still largely reliant on school papers for an appropriately regional reading program.

The value of reading, particularly the "appreciation" of literature, was instilled at Teachers' College. In one of Annie's notebooks, a list of hints on teaching practice includes the following: "Don't hesitate to let yourself go and enthuse over a bit of good literature or historical narrative". Yet as Pat Buckridge's work in a recent issue of *Australian Literary Studies* demonstrates, the appreciation of literature is an ambiguous concept, particularly in terms of teaching and learning.³ In the context of School Papers and school Readers, however, "appreciation" becomes a rather more loaded term, suggesting, as it does, a correct way of reading as informed by the supervision of the educational apparatus itself. Indeed, as I have already pointed out, the perceived role of literature as a socialising agent is both acknowledged and celebrated in various reading series' prefaces. Students were expected not only to pay close attention to language and literary form, but more potently, to identify those values inscribed in the texts, what Annie terms the "main thought" (in her lesson plans). In Annie's notes for reading lessons, the uncovering of these "main thoughts" was often the yardstick against which student achievement could be measured. As becomes clear from the Readers' notes and Annie's lessons plans, these paratexts and teacherly performances ensured that particular ways of reading the Readers were privileged and prescribed. In the theatre of teaching, texts as literary and educational artefacts are mediated by the performance of the teacher

called upon to produce their desired ideological effects.

The convergence of teacher, student and text is central to my argument here that School Readers can, and should, be read in relation to a certain kind of performativity enacted in the classroom context. Again, Dale has prefigured this move: “Studies that focus on what happens in classrooms – and what happens *after* classrooms: the practices, and long-term impact, of teaching and learning – will be essential” (201). Noel King’s examination of the 1921 Newbolt Report, offers a way of enunciating the heightened responsibility of the teacher in a modernised curriculum, a curriculum in which English literature was seen as fundamental to the formation of a sense of self. No longer a “remote overseer”, the teacher in this context becomes an “ever-present moral personage”, a “visible representative of the author, the pupil’s local guide to the ethical treasures stored in the text” (42). Where literature is viewed as a powerful repository of human experience, the committees responsible for the production of School Readers, like the authors of the Newbolt Report before and after them, position the teacher as the authority consciously mediating between this repository and the student (42). This complex interaction between teacher, student and school text is most obviously located in the teacher’s performance of reading material. As George Sampson asserts in *English for the English*, published the same year as the Newbolt Report, teaching is “the transmission [...] of an emotional experience embodied in great expression” (qtd in King 45). This conception of the necessarily dramatic role of the teacher is not simply framed by the Newbolt Report and other writings of the early 1920s; it is borne out in teaching practice circulating in Australian schools later that same decade.

This is evidenced in Annie’s notes where there are numerous references to the performative aspects of her teaching. The teacher’s transmission of the text, the modulations in voice and tone, the gestures and facial expressions, are intended to ensure that students make sense of the text in an appropriate way. Banjo Paterson’s

“Over the Range” is to be read as “expressively as possible”, “The story of William Tell” is to be told in “an interesting and quiet way”, and an Arbour Day poem is to be read “as emphatically as possible”. Sometimes, Annie’s notes direct her to “stress main thoughts” as she reads. It is likely that these main thoughts are performed and emphasised for students according to a theatre-like interplay of speech, gesture and the use of visual aids, such as blackboard illustrations. Those responsible for teacher training clearly recognised the importance of these theatrical codes in assigning meaning to texts. On a lesson entitled “With Hudson into Arctic Seas”, Annie’s supervising teacher A. B. Jones writes, “the story was told very well indeed, and you showed considerable power of vivid and dramatic narrative [...] Light and shade was effectively introduced into the voice and inflexion added to the value of the telling [...] You have teaching capacity of a high order, and if you can eliminate certain crudities of speech such as faulty vowels, some harshness of tone etc. you should reach front rank.”

While reading children’s literature, particularly picture books, through the lens of the semiotics of performance is not a new approach to examining their narratological operations, in the case of the under-examined Readers, such an approach opens up some interesting directions for research where lesson plans and Readers operate as scripts and sites for performance.⁴ In the same way pupils in a classroom do not respond to a text unless questioned, the conventions of theatre performance typically require the audience to remain silent. Just as a script offers stage directions to produce a particular kind of performance, the classroom context, the reading situation in which an adult performs a text for a child, confers upon the teacher considerable authority over the text itself.

Such an authority operates to reinforce the teacher’s reading of the text as that which is correct and appropriate. In this way the teacher can interject in other possible readings, even those immediately outside of the “scene of teaching”, readings undertaken by the pupils themselves. For example, during another of

Annie's lesson plans, students present the main thought of the passage after silent and individual reading. Significantly though, relations between the teacher, student and school text position the teacher as the conduit through which the text will ultimately be understood. There is an expectation here that student ideas will need to be appraised and interrogated - step one of the lesson plan reads "teacher to ask student main thought, then to criticize it". More powerfully though, the teacher is responsible for a final interpretation of the text, as revealed in the following step, when the teacher "gives children the main thought". King identifies this kind of pedagogical approach as one that produces a "teacher who stands in a slightly therapeutic relation to his or her pupils [...] It is a carefully controlled 'learning by experience' [...] The student as subject is already fully formed (possessing opinions and experiences) and yet also somehow formless, infinitely open to further shaping" (42-3).

School Readers were always intended to be read under a teacher's watchful gaze. Development of the Readers assumed a classroom context, a "scene of teaching" that, it was expected, would guide the reception of reading material. In this sense, although the School Readers were produced for primary school pupils, the teacher was, in fact, always at their centre.



Figure 38: Annie Gillard

Annie Gillard is the centrepiece of this photograph. *Harrow 1928* is inscribed on the back of the photograph above the “Kodak print” stamp. The place and date is written precisely in black ink. A more unsteady (older) hand takes up a blue ballpoint pen some time after the original inscription and *Anne G.* is written in. My grandmother then, has left textual traces to mark the image as a record of her youth — just as she annotates the war memorial brochure. This kind of preparation for passing, the passing of time, people and memories, was a singular concern of my grandmother’s. It makes sense then that she was the one to introduce me to school Readers. In exploring something of Annie’s archive of self, and in researching what

have always been, to me, “her” school Readers, I have satisfied what Stephen Greenblatt identifies as a “familiar, if unvoiced, motive in literary studies”, the desire to speak with the dead (1). The motivation, it seems, extends beyond literary studies. In *Negotiating with the Dead*, Margaret Atwood posits that: “all writing of the narrative kind, and perhaps all writing, is motivated, deep down, by a fear of and a fascination with mortality — by a desire to make the risky trip to the Underworld, and to bring something or someone back from the dead” (140). I wonder how many more ghosts might be retrieved in a further examination of school reading books and the Australian and imperial educational networks that produced them — those writers, teachers, academics, critics and publishers charged with their production, instruction and/or dissemination.

Notes:

¹ There is an added impetus too given that a National English Curriculum is presently being developed. Examining the institutionalization of the national imaginary in reading materials and curriculum documents of the past can usefully inform debate about a national approach to English education, especially in connection with “the texts of English” and “the place of literature and Australian literature” (“National English Curriculum: Framing paper” 6).

² Bell was chaplain for a time for the East India Company in Madras. In this capacity, Bell worked at the Madras Male Military Asylum, where he developed his technique of “mutual instruction”, in which older boys helped to teach those younger than themselves. The E.I.C. authorities had set up the Male Military Asylum in 1789 as “a boarding school for orphans and the illegitimate sons of native women and British soldiers” (Gilroy 3). Bell published the details of this system in *An Experiment in Education* in 1797.

³ Significantly, in this discussion Buckridge anticipates some of my concerns here when he argues that a tradition of literary appreciation cannot be isolated to one or another sector of the “institution of literature”: “Literary appreciation was being taught, valued and practiced in primary and secondary schools, in universities (intra- and extra-mural), and in the general reading culture, in several different parts of the world (including Australia), at more or less the same time. And the boundaries between the various cultural, national and educational sectors were relatively porous: lines of cultural influence, commercial exchange and administrative responsibility passed from one to the other in several different directions” (344).

⁴ For a discussion of intersections between performativity and children’s literatures, see Elizabeth Parsons, “Starring in the Intimate Space” and “Performing Picture Books”, for example.

Appendix: Mapping School Reading Series

Reading books used around Australia (where known) and the approximate dates at which they were introduced:

VIC	QLD	NSW	SA	WA	TAS
1850s <i>Irish National Readers</i>	1860 <i>Irish National Readers</i>	1850s <i>Irish National Readers</i>	1860 <i>Irish National Readers</i>	1860 <i>Irish National Readers</i>	1830s -1906 <i>Daily Lesson Books</i> (British & Foreign School Society), <i>Irish National Readers</i> , <i>Australian Readers</i> , <i>Royal Readers</i>
1875 <i>Royal Readers</i> (Nelson, London)	1878 <i>Australian Readers</i> (Collins, Glasgow)		1878 <i>Royal Readers</i> (Nelson)		
1896 <i>The School Paper</i> (Also prescribed reading in Tas, WA & Fiji)	1892 <i>Royal Readers</i> (Nelson) – supplemented by <i>Blackie's Century</i> <i>Readers</i> & <i>Blackwood's</i> <i>Geographical Readers</i>		1889 <i>The Children's Hour</i> (used alongside <i>Royal</i> <i>Readers</i> until becoming sole prescribed reading material)	Early 1900s [?] <i>The New Graphic</i> <i>Readers</i> (Collins, Glasgow) and the <i>Temple Literary</i> <i>Reader</i>	
1928 (publication date) <i>The Victorian Readers</i> <i>First & Eighth Book</i>	1914 <i>Queensland School</i> <i>Readers Books I-VI</i>	1904 <i>Commonwealth School</i> <i>Paper</i>	1925 (publication date) <i>The Adelaide Readers</i> <i>Book I, II & IV</i>	1910 <i>The Oxford Reader</i>	1906 <i>The School Paper</i> (Vic) (used along with <i>Tasmanian History</i> <i>Readers</i> , Nelson, London)

1929 <i>The Victorian Readers Third & Sixth Book</i>		190[?]-191[?] <i>The New Australian School Series</i>	1926 <i>The Adelaide Readers Book III</i>	1920 (publication date) <i>The Swan School Reader Fifth Book</i> (used along with <i>The School Paper</i> , Vic, and <i>Our Rural Magazine</i>)	1924 <i>The Pacific Readers Fifth & Sixth Reader</i> (Whitcombe & Tombs, Christchurch) replace <i>The School Paper</i>
1930 <i>Victorian Readers Second, Fourth, Fifth & Seventh Book</i>		1916 <i>NSW School Magazine</i>	1928 <i>The Adelaide Readers Book V</i>	1932 (publication date) <i>Western Australian Reader Book IV</i>	1929 <i>British Empire Readers</i> (Longman, London)
				1933 <i>Western Australian Reader Book VI</i>	1933 (publication date) <i>The Tasmanian Readers</i>

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